ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

THE BEST WILD WEST STORIES PUBLISHED

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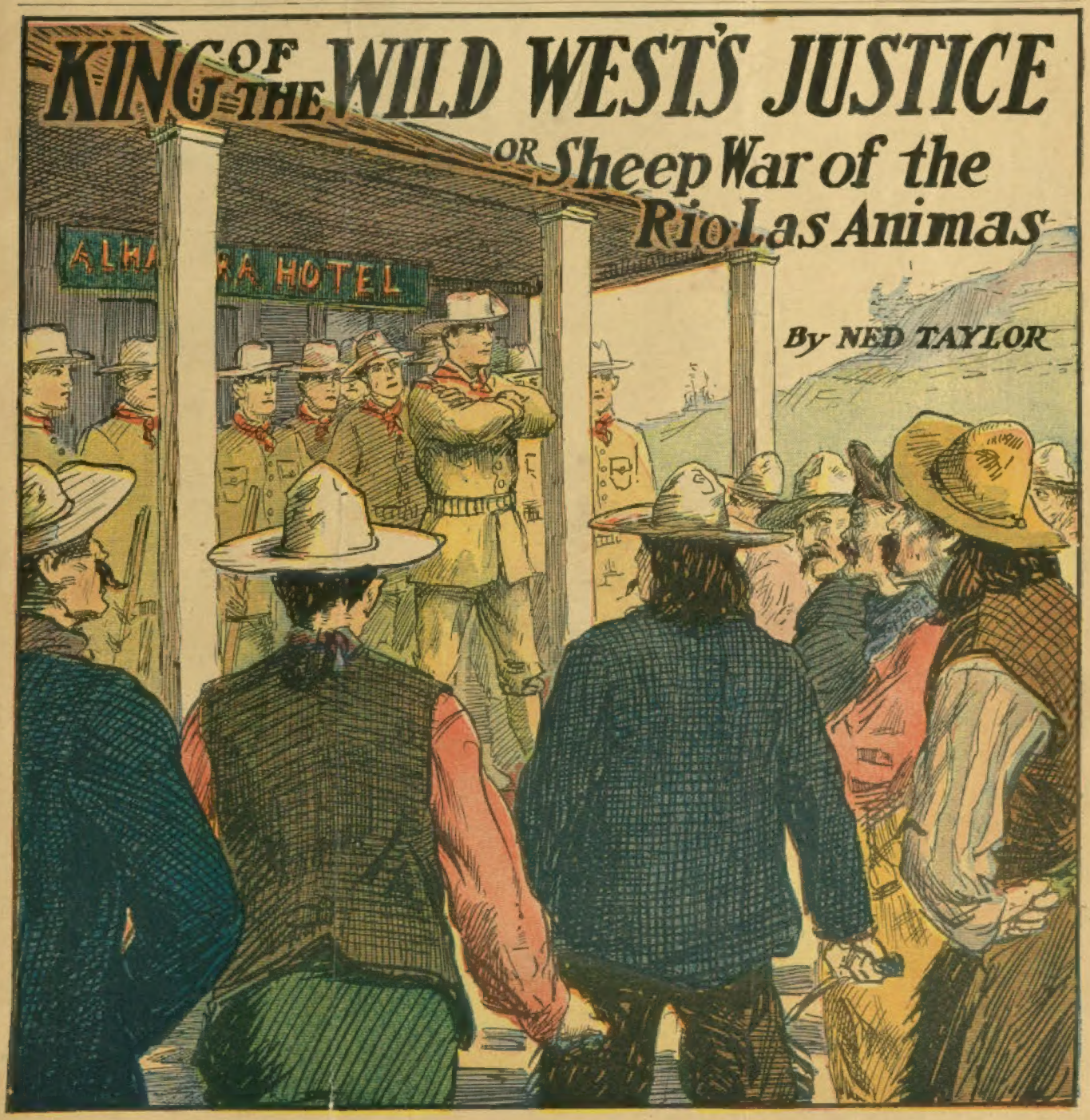
KING OF THE WILD WEST'S JUSTICE

OR Sheep War of the Rio Las Animas

By NED TAYLOR



"If another sheep herder is shot in this neck of the woods, out of the country and over the road every man of you go," said Ted.

"KING OF THE WILD WEST"

ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

TED STRONG, the young deputy sheriff of Strongburg, is known by every one as "The King of the Wild West." Ted and his plucky girl pard, Stella, have some very exciting adventures on the plains and in the mountains. No other stories of Western adventure are half so interesting. Do not fail to buy No. 103. It's a treat.

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THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE STORIES PUBLISHED IN ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY READ IT!

King of the Wild West's Dive;

OR,

THE FINDING OF THE "GOLDEN BABY."

By NED TAYLOR.

CHAPTER I.

STELLA IN HER OWN DEFENSE.

Stella Fosdick's sole remaining relative was Mrs. Walter Graham, her aunt.

Mrs. Graham was the wife of the owner of the Los Gatos Ranch, in the western part of Valencia County, New Mexico, and the sister of the late Colonel Fosdick, Stella's father.

Colonel Fosdick's dying wish, which he had communicated to Ted Strong, King of the Wild West, was that the young rough riders should take care of Stella and conduct her safely to her aunt at the Los Gatos Ranch.

Immediately after the death of Frederico del Riza, and the disbandment of his mysterious gang of white-faced robbers, Ted suggested that they carry out her father's wish.

Stella was nothing loath, for since the death of her father the Sierra Blanca Ranch and everything about it had become exceedingly distasteful to her.

Ted, as administrator of her estate, made arrangements with a lawyer at Sierra Blanca to look after the property until he could return to settle up the affairs of the place, and left a foreman in charge of the stock and the horses.

Then, acting as the escort of the girl, the young rough riders set out for New Mexico.

Stella was not sure that she would like her new home, but she was game to a fault, and, anyhow, she could not stay where she was, and was anxious to carry out her father's wishes in everything.

"I'm afraid it's going to be a pretty lonely place for a girl out there," said Ted, as they sat in the train that was bearing them to the West.

In the party, besides Ted and Stella Fosdick, were Bud Morgan, Ben Tremont, and Kit Summers, who were in the observation-car watching the country through which they were passing.

"I suppose so," said Stella, in reply to Ted. "But that does not worry me very much. It could not be any lonelier than Sierra Blanca would be with poor dad gone, and I have many ways of amusing myself. I have my rifle and my dogs, Don and Cæsar, and my pony Chispa. What more does any girl want to amuse herself with?"

"I have met some who wanted balls and parties, matinées and plenty of the society of young men."

"Thank fortune I am not of that kind, I have lived so long alone with my father, and he has taught me that a ranch woman must be self-reliant. It was from him that I learned to ride and shoot, and I have hunted everything from jack-rabbits up to grizzly bears with him, and know as much about it as any boy. If there is any hunting in New Mexico I guess I'll be able to pass the time away without getting the blues."

"Well, when we get out there we'll have a little hunt together, as a sort of farewell. What do you say?"

"The very thing. Do you know whether there is anything there worth shooting?"

"If it is anything like it was when I was there a year or so ago there should be plenty, and of the most desperate sort."

"What? You have been there! Tell me about it. What game were you after?"

"Men, I——"

"Men! What sort of men?"

"The worst in the territory. I was at the time guardian of the son of the governor of the territory."

"But why were you hunting men?"

"It was a band of desperadoes who had been trying to run the territory without the aid of the governor, and as he proposed to run the country to suit himself they became his bitterest enemies, and to get even with him tried to steal his son."

"And how was it that you got into it?"

"The governor was a friend of mine, the same as your father, and when this trouble arose he sent for me to come and help him to defend his son against the men."

"And that was the way you came to help dad out, too, and then had to take charge of me. I hope I will not be any more trouble to you. But if it hadn't been for you I don't know what would have become of me with Del Riza and his gang. You don't know how grateful I am to you. Some day I may be able to do as much for you, and you bet you can count on me."

The girl's eyes flashed as she said this, and Ted, who admired both her courage and good looks, flushed as he said:

"We'll forget what you owe me, for I consider that we are all in luck to be called upon to be of service to you."

"Tell me something about this place to which I am going," said Stella hastily, to avoid anything further of a complimentary nature, but at the same time her face was covered with a very becoming blush, caused by the tone of Ted's voice and the admiration in his look, which, however, were respectful and not at all displeasing to her.

Stella was the sort of girl who could be a good companion to a fellow without falling in love. And having been brought up in the boundless, happy-go-lucky West, she was self-reliant and thoroughly able to take care of herself at all times.

That she was pretty goes without saying, but it was not the prettiness of the parlor and ballroom, but of prairie air and exercise.

She was not as tall as Ted, but her lithe young body was almost as strong as a boy's. Her dark hair fell in a wavy mass upon her shoulders, confined only by a knot of ribbon.

From under her straight brows a pair of large gray eyes looked steadily into those of the person to whom she was talking, and it did not take more than a glance to see that they showed a courageous spirit.

Her slender figure was clothed according to her own ideas of what a Western girl should wear, and especially one who was much in the saddle. She wore a short tan skirt and high riding-boots of soft tan leather. A red bolero jacket, tastefully trimmed with gold bullion, completed her costume, with the exception of a large, light-colored sombrero, the brim of which was tilted up jauntily on one side, which was held with a band of rattlesnake skin. On her hip hung a cartridge-belt and holster of tan leather, from which peeped the pearl and gold handle of a revolver.

As she entered the train at El Paso for her trip to the West, she had attracted the attention of every one, not altogether because of her unusual costume, but on account of her beauty, which, as we shall presently see, was to be the cause of trouble for one of the passengers.

She was a fit companion for the King of the Wild West, whose good looks and smart khaki uniform, as well as his quiet and gentlemanly demeanor, were matters for polite comment by the tourist passengers who filled the cars.

But as they talked together in the Pullman car both Stella and Ted were unconscious that they had caused any ripple in the minds of the other passengers.

"You asked me to tell you something of the part of the country to which you are going," said Ted thoughtfully.

"Yes, I should like very much to know something about it," answered the girl.

"It's not much like any other part of the West that I have ever been in. It's a sheep country, you know."

"I didn't know. I'm afraid I sha'n't like it very much. I have all the dislike of a cattleman's daughter for a sheep country."

"But it is the country itself that is different. It is quite wonderful in its way. You understand we are going to leave the cars at Gonzales and ride to the ranch. I suppose your uncle will have horses and a guide there for us when we arrive. I have been over that country, but I might not be able to find the Los Gatos Ranch, at that."

"Why not? I thought you had been in the West long enough to follow a sky trail."

"A sky trail?"

"Yes, that is what dad used to call it. If you know the general direction of where you want to go you can hit the trail and keep it by night or day if you can follow your trail in the sky above sun and clouds by day, stars and moon by night."

"Oh, I understand. Yes, I've followed many a trail in the sky. But what do you know about it?"

"I know all about it. Dad taught me when we were camping together. But what is there so difficult about this sheep country we are going to?" She mentioned the sheep country with some contempt, for there is nothing that a true cowpuncher so holds as beneath him as a sheep or a sheep-herder. And as for sheep land, no self-respecting cow or steer will ever graze on it until it has been purified by many winter rains and summer suns.

"It is the worst mixed-up country I ever was in," answered Ted. "It is a succession of mountain and mesa, desert and sweet pastures. There are stretches of miles of lava on which not even a Gila monster could exist, and close at hand valleys full of sweet grass, hip high. But more remarkable than all there is a succession of lakes thereabouts which are as clear as crystal but which are too brackish to drink, and others close beside them which are as sweet as a mountain spring. Then, to cap all, an

extinct volcano rises above it, and close beside a dead crater like a great gray bowl in which the water rises and falls as if with the tide on the seashore. I don't know just how far your uncle's ranch is from what I have just described, but it is what I have seen."

"It sounds very interesting," said the girl. "As soon as I can I am going to visit those lakes and dead volcanoes for myself."

"If you do I would warn you to be very careful and have an escort. There are not only Indians there, but plenty of bad men on the scout."

"On the scout? I don't understand."

"When a desperado takes to the hills to keep out of the hands of the United States officers he is said to be 'on the scout.' And I want to assure you that there are plenty of them in that part of New Mexico."

"Well, before you start back again I guess we can all go out together. From what I have seen of you and your friends I think you are a pretty safe escort in the event of meeting with any gentlemen on the 'scout.'"

The girl looked at Ted and laughed.

"At least, having had one experience, I should not be afraid to trust myself in your hands if it came to a brush with trouble."

Ted smiled his thanks for the compliment, and, rising, excused himself until he could look up the boys and see how they were getting on.

Stella dismissed him with a bright nod, and picking up a magazine which Ted had bought for her busied herself with it.

But she was not to be left to herself long.

Across the aisle from her sat one of those pestiferous creatures known as a railway masher. He was dressed in the height of fashion, with a curled blond mustache and curly hair, which he kept looking at in a hand mirror all the time he was not staring at Stella. He was a good-looking and dashing chap, and evidently thought he was quite irresistible.

But Stella had not noticed him and kept her eyes fastened on the pages of her magazine.

The fellow coughed and tried to attract her attention in various ways, but she continued to be oblivious of him.

Finally he rose and crossed over to her, and sat down beside her. Stella thought Ted had returned and she moved over to make room for him, but did not look up for the moment as she was interested in the paragraph she was reading.

When she did look up it was with a bright smile of welcome, which changed to a deep blush when she saw who was beside her.

But the masher thought that the smile was really intended for him, for he had all the conceit of the professional annoyer of women, and returned it with a self-satisfied smirk.

"I see you are interested in literature," he said, in his sweetest voice, "and I have brought you another magazine. Let us look at the pictures together. They are very interesting."

Stella had crowded against the window away from him. She was not exactly frightened, for she was very brave, but this was a new experience to her.

She did not know just what to make of it, nor, for the moment, just what to do.

The masher edged closer to her, turning over the pages of the magazine, and looking up at her with a smile intended to be heart-breaking.

Stella was looking at him with an expression of disgust.

Just at that moment Ted and the boys appeared at the end of the car, and took it all in. Ted was about to rush forward and do something desperate, but Bud laid his hand on his arm.

"Jest a minnit," he whispered. "I reckon ther gal kin settle it herself."

They stood watching the scene for a moment.

"I wish you would leave here," said Stella, in a low voice. "I don't know you, and I don't want to."

"Don't be cruel, little girl," said the masher. "You'll like me as soon as you get to know me."

There was a smack that could be heard above the noise of the train. Stella's strong hand had come in sudden contact with the cheek of the masher.

CHAPTER II.

TED DISCOVERS A CONSPIRACY.

Ted broke from Bud's detaining hand and rushed through the car.

At the same time there was a roar of laughter from the men in the car at the sight of the discomfiture of the masher.

Ted grabbed the fellow, yanked him from his seat, and administered several kicks on a portion of his anatomy where they would do the most good. Then he was dragged along to the door and hustled out of the car.

Ted was speechless with rage over the incident, and blamed himself for having left Stella to the mercy of the fellow.

"Don't worry about it," said Stella. "For a minute I was a bit frightened, but you bet I got over it soon. When he came and sat beside me I thought it was you, and made room for him. Then when I saw it was a masher trying to strike up an acquaintance, I got so mad that I just gave him a slap for luck. I guess it didn't hurt him much, but it will teach him to mind his own business for awhile. We're not used to such cattle where I come from."

Presently the porter from the Pullman car ahead came in and gathered up the baggage of the man who had been ejected, and the people in the car settled down to a new interest in Ted and Stella.

When the conductor of the train came through he signaled to Ted that he wanted to talk to him, and Ted followed him to the rear of the car.

"Do you know who that was whom you threw out of this car?" asked the conductor.

"No, and I don't care," answered Ted. "He insulted the young lady in my charge, and she punished him for it, and I threw him out. What about it?"

Ted was still angry about the incident, and was inclined to be hostile at any mention of it.

"Let me see," said the conductor, with an easy smile. He gloried in Ted's spunk, but at the same time he had to pay some attention to the assault.

"Your tickets read to Gonzales, do they not?"

Ted nodded for reply.

"So do his," said the conductor. "If you are going to stay in Gonzales I would advise you to look out for him. I understand he is a banker there, or at least the son of one of the richest men in that part of the territory, and he is making all sorts of threats against you."

"I think I better go forward and settle this thing right now," said Ted. "Evidently he has not had his lesson yet."

"I wish you could, but I cannot permit any such thing. I just came to give you a friendly tip to look out for him. I understand that he has a lot of friends in Gonzales, and you know what a fellow like that is apt to do. Keep your eye peeled for him—that's all."

Ted saw that the conductor was right, and agreed to say nothing more about the matter.

The next morning the train pulled into Gonzales, and the boys helped Miss Fosdick out to the platform, where they expected to meet Mr. Walter Graham, who was one of the largest sheep-herders in the territory and was well known everywhere, but Stella looked for him in vain. He was not there.

Ted made inquiries at the station about the distance to the Los Gatos Ranch, and was told that it would take the party until well into the night to reach the Graham place if they started at once and rode hard all day.

Ted was at a loss to know what to do.

Evidently there had been a mistake somewhere, for Mr. Graham had intended to meet his niece with horses, and escort her to her future home. But when Ted made inquiries at the station again he found that his telegram announcing the time of their arrival had not been delivered to Mr. Graham, but still lay in the station.

"None of the folks from the Graham ranch have been in town since your message came, and the only way to deliver it is by the stage that does not leave until tomorrow."

With this news he went back to where the boys were standing with Stella at the end of the platform, where they had alighted from the train.

"What shall we do about it?" asked Ted. "Shall we get horses and try to push on, or wait for the stage? There is no use waiting here until the stage takes our telegram out to Mr. Graham and he starts back after us. We don't know the way, but I guess we can find it. Bud's pretty handy at hitting a trail."

"What's the matter with sticking to the road?" asked Ben Tremont. "We'd get there some time."

"We shore would; but what time? Erlong erbout ther fo'th o' July next," said Bud. "I'm fer startin' to onct and takin' our chances. I reckon I see worse. Why, down on ther Pecos——"

"Say, if you ever mention the Pecos to me again I'm going to get out an injunction against you," said Ben. "I don't believe you ever saw the Pecos. What is a Pecos, anyhow?"

"A Pecos ain't one o' them pin-head doods what think all there is to learn is ter be learned in college," replied Bud hotly. "A Pecos is ther real thing thet cuts its ha'r onct in erwhile, an' doesn't play hoss eround, an' gallop erbout with a leather bag under its arm an' think its playin' feetball an' bein' a real man; it's a——"

"Oh, cut it out, you two," said Ted, laughing.

"Well, he's got ter let up on this Pecos bizness, er I'll—— I don't care if he is big. I'd tackle him if he was as big as Pike's Peak."

But Ted and the other boys were laughing so hard that Bud himself saw the humor of the situation and proceeded to explain it to Stella, who knew the Pecos River country herself, and promptly took his part.

"I reckon you've missed erbout a thousand good stories by interjectin' yer insults ever' time I mention ther Pecos," said Bud dryly. "At all events, I'm fer hittin' ther trail."

"So am I," said Stella promptly. "I want to get out to the Los Gatos Ranch, and I know that my aunt will be mighty anxious until I do get there. I'll take the chance if you will. We ought to get there by dark tonight if we start right away."

"Then it's decided that we are to start at once, and not wait for Mr. Graham," said Ted. "If that's the vote on the question, I'll go and find some horses."

"That's the decision," said the boys, and Stella nodded her acquiescence.

As Ted rounded the corner of the station on his way up-town he overheard a man say:

"All right, Mr. Waters, they don't get no horses from my place, an' I'll see 'Red' Slavin at once an' get him to hustle up the rest o' the boys, an' report to you at the bank."

"All right, Kike," was the reply. "You take care of them on the horse question and I'll look out for the rest of it. I'll get square with those pups before I get through with them. They can't insult me in that manner, and then come into my own country and get away easy."

Ted was approaching an open window in the station when he heard these words, and as he passed he looked in.

There he saw the young fellow who had been slapped by Stella and then kicked by himself for butting in where he had not been invited.

This was Mr. Waters, without doubt, and he glared at Ted, and pointed him out to the man with whom he had been talking.

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DICK MERRIWELL'S VISIT;

OR,

HOT TIMES AT FARNHAM HALL.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

GIVING HIS ENEMY A SHOW.

Two boys paused outside the partly opened door of a room at Farnham Hall.

"'St!" hissed the smaller one, grasping his companion's arm and restraining him. "Listen!"

Within the room they heard a slightly guttural voice droning in the manner of a small boy learning to read at the knee of a schoolmistress.

"This—is—a—horse. Do—you—see—the—horse? The—horse—eats—grass. He—eats—o-o-o——"

There was a succession of grunts, and gurglings, and mutterings.

"No savvy that word, Spark," said the same guttural voice.

"Why, that is oats, Joe. 'The horse eats oats, too.'"

"Ugh! Oats, uh? Joe savvy now. He read some more."

"That's enough for to-day, Crowfoot," declared a voice well known to the boys outside the door. "You're a marvel. All I have to do is to point out a word once and tell you what it is, and you never forget it. Why, if you keep on the way you've begun, you'll read anything in the English language inside of two months."

"Spark think so?" questioned the guttural voice, now tinged with pride and pleasure. "Joe do his best. Shangowah, my grandfather, say I must do all I can to learn white man's wisdom."

"But you've got to take a rest some time, Crowfoot; you'll blow up. You work every moment you're awake, and you sleep only when compelled to do so. Your physical perfection has led Merriwell to give you little work in the gymnasium, with the result that you're always studying over that book. It's not yet ten days since you commenced studying, and you can read amazingly well."

"Joe put his mind on it hard. You think he learn well, Spark?"

"Why, hang it, Crowfoot, didn't I just say you were a marvel! You seem to learn everything with lightninglike quickness."

"You heap good friend, Spark. Mebbe some time Joe show he remember how good friend you are to him. You think he learn baseball so he play bimeby?"

"I'll make a wizard of you, or I'm a lobster! Hush! the door is open. Some one may be listening."

"Ugh! Two boys they out there. They listen some time. Joe he so much proud what he can do he want um to know."

Dale Sparkfair flung wide open the door of his room and found Bob Bubbs and Hiram Bemis outside.

"Well, wouldn't that jar you!" exclaimed Bubbs. "How did Crowfoot know we were here?"

Crowfoot was the Indian boy who had lately arrived at Farnham Hall, and who shared the room with Dale Sparkfair. He smiled a bit at Bob's question.

"Joe have ears," he said. "He hear steps. He know two boys stop near door. He hear whisper sound out there."

"Great Jamaica ginger!" laughed Hi Bemis. "It ain't no use to sneak round where you be, Crowfoot. I'd give something if I had ears like them."

The Indian boy had risen to his feet. Much of the awkwardness he first betrayed in the clothes of the paleface was now gone, and he seemed decidedly at his ease. He was finely formed and graceful, yet his lithe limbs were muscular to an amazing degree.

Crowfoot knew Bubbs and Bemis to be two of Sparkfair's friends, and therefore he was not shy and reserved in their presence.

"Close that door, Hi," directed Bob. "We don't want any one else coming around here to listen."

"No danger of that with Crowfoot here," said Bemis.

But he closed the door.

"We've come to talk business with you, Spark," explained Bubbs, in an unusually serious manner. "You know the regular baseball-team is going to be made up this week, and some one will be chosen captain. Only for this trouble with Featherstone the question of who will be captain would be settled now."

"I reckon it's pretty well settled, anyway," put in Bemis.

"That's right," nodded the little chap. "We've canvassed the school, and we know the sentiment is with Sparkfair. He's the fellow most of the boys want for captain, although some of them seem to think that Featherstone will rebel and refuse to pitch on the team unless he is chosen captain. We can't afford to lose Featherstone as a pitcher, for he's demonstrated the fact that he's the cleverest twirler we have."

As Towser uttered these words a peculiar expression flitted across the face of Young Joe Crowfoot, but it was gone in a twinkling, and he stood listening like a graven image.

"Yes, we need Featherstone as a pitcher," agreed Sparkfair.

"But if he's fool enough to refuse to pitch because the majority of the fellows want some one else for cap'n, we'll have to git along without him," said Bemis. "I tell you, Spark, we can't afford to cater to that chap a bit. He's gut to be held right down, or he'll try to run things his way, and it ain't his way to give you much of a show."

Dale laughed.

"He tried to give me something after he was caught in this room that night when he came here to haze me, bringing a few of his friends along."

"Yep," nodded Bemis, with a chuckle. "Merriwell put him on bread and water for awhile, and it made him pretty all-fired hot under the collar. He was so riled about it that he lost his head in the gym and tried to lay you out with a dumb-bell. He'd done it if Crowfoot hadn't hit his arm just as he flung the dumb-bell at the back of your head."

"Yes," nodded Dale. "I fancy I have Crowfoot to thank for saving me from a broken head."

"Well, a fellow like Featherstone doesn't really deserve any consideration," said Bubbs. "If he wasn't a good pitcher, I'd be against having him on the team. Anyhow, with his disposition, I'm not certain he'll be of any value to the team. For that nasty trick with the dumb-bell Merriwell made him a 'solitary.' He was condemned to room alone for a week and was forbidden to speak to any boy in the school. The rest of us have been forbidden to speak to him. His week will be up to-morrow, and he'll again have the same privileges as the rest of us. You can bet your life he'll make all the trouble he can for you, Spark. That's why I'm in favor of immediately settling this question in regard to the captaincy of the nine. As manager of the team, Bemis favors you, and the majority of the committee will stand with Bemis. The committee has authority to appoint the captain this year. You were the one who suggested that the whole school should have a voice in the matter. We've electioneered enough to know that if a meeting is called right away, you'll be the one chosen captain. Now we urge that such a meeting be held before Featherstone has a chance to get out and make further trouble. What do you say to that?"

Dale reflected a moment, but finally shook his head slowly.

"I don't favor it," he answered.

"Don't?" squawked Bemis, in surprise. "Why not?"

"It's not giving Featherstone a square deal."

"Great Jamaica ginger!" gurgled Hi. "Why should you give him a square deal?"

"That's what I'd like to know," came from Bubbs.

"Well, I'll tell you why," said Dale. "Whatever we may say against Featherstone, we must give him credit for one thing—he has not squealed. Had he chosen to do so in the first place, he might have made a complaint against me when he was put on bread and

water for attempting to haze me. Didn't we, as members of the Secret Order of Scalp-Lifters and braves of the Raw Dog Tribe, capture Featherstone and take him into the Black Pines for the purpose of warming him up some?

"Certainly we did. He attempted to retaliate the night he sneaked in here with some of his friends to pounce on me. It happened that he got the worst of it. He was battered unmercifully with the stuffed clubs I had prepared for that occasion, and the racket aroused all the boys who were not sleeping like logs. Featherstone was caught, but his chums escaped. He took his medicine the next day without blowing on any one. When asked who was with him, he kept mum. Had he been inclined to squeal, he might have claimed he was simply trying to get even with me for that Indian racket we perpetrated on him. He never breathed a word about it."

"Because he thought some one else would," said Bubbs. "Some one else tried it, too."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I thought some of that bunch would carry tales to Merriwell, and I tried to keep watch of them. Slick was the fellow who did it. He didn't know I was near when he stopped Merriwell in front of the private office and commenced to tell him all about that scalp-lifting jamboree."

"So Slick peached, eh?"

"That's what he did. He didn't tell much of the yarn, though he rattled off part of it before Merriwell shut him up. He said you were the leader of a bunch of fellows rigged up as Indians, who jumped on Featherstone and Shackleton in the village. Said Shackleton got away, but Featherstone was captured and dragged over into the Pines. Then Merriwell closed him up good and hard. He told him it was the place of Featherstone or Shackleton to make a complaint if the story was true. He asked Slick if he was present when the thing occurred. Asked him if he saw any of the 'Indians.' Slick had to acknowledge that he hadn't seen anything and didn't know anything more than he'd been told. That fixed Slick. Merriwell informed him that his complaint and his testimony would be absolutely worthless. He informed Slick he would wait until he heard something about the matter from Featherstone or Shackleton."

"And it's absolutely certain," said Dale, "that he's never heard anything from either Featherstone or Shackleton. Such being the case, I feel in duty bound to give Featherstone a square show in this baseball deal. No, boys, I'll not accept the position of captain on the team if I'm chosen before Guy Featherstone has an opportunity to rally his supporters and take part in the contest."

"Heap good!" nodded the Indian boy approvingly. "That not Injun way to deal with enemy, but it sure be right, for Spark him do it."

CHAPTER II.

SPARKFAIR'S PROPOSITION.

It was a bright, sunny spring day when the "solitary" came out and stood on the steps of Farnham Hall. At last his term of punishment was over, and he could mingle with the other boys, enjoying their privileges.

Still, Featherstone's heart was heavy, and there was a black frown on his face. Several boys were approaching, and Guy stood glaring with rancor at one of them.

"Hello, Featherstone!" called the boy at whom Guy glared. "Is the ban off? Can you join us now? I'm glad of it."

"You lie, Sparkfair!" said Guy harshly.

Dale whistled.

"Polite as ever, aren't you!" he smiled. "But I suppose we ought to make allowances for you. It must have been mighty rotten to be shut off from all the fellows just at this time."

"Don't try to rub it in!" snarled Featherstone.

Dale looked grieved.

"I'm not trying to rub it in, old man," he asserted.

"Yes, you are! You're not glad to see me. You've been having things pretty much your own way while I was shut off from the fellows. You didn't have me to bother you."

"Oh, you don't bother me in the least," laughed Sparkfair. "In fact, I've missed you a great deal, Feather. You make it so lively when you're frisking around that it seemed positively monotonous of late."

The boy on the steps grated his teeth.

"I'll make it lively for you if I get an opportunity!" he muttered fiercely. "I don't know what's been going on lately. No one has been allowed to tell me a thing. I suppose you have chosen yourself captain of the nine."

"Do you?"

"It would be just like you."

"That's what you think."

"Oh, I know you! I know the kind of a conceited, greedy, swell-head you are!"

"Now, hold on!" cried Hiram Bemis, who was one of the boys. "You're going too far, Feather! There ain't nobody been appointed cap'n of the nine yet."

"Is it possible?" sneered Guy. "How does that happen?"

"It happened because Sparkfair refused to take the position while you were a solitary. He might have had it, and don't you forget that! You've been making some nasty talk to him that I'd advise you to swallow in a hurry. He positively declined to be appointed captain until you could have a chance to fight for your rights."

Featherstone laughed harshly.

"He's pretty clever, isn't he!" sneered Guy. "He knew how it would look if he took the place under such circumstances, and so he played his cards to make a show of fairness before the rest of the fellows.

I see through him! I'll guarantee that he has it all fixed so there is really no show for me."

"You're such a wise chap that it's impossible to fool you," said Dale, with a pretense of admiration. "How do you fancy I've fixed it?"

"Oh, you've been around pledging the fellows to support you."

"I'll give you five dollars for every fellow you can find who'll say I've ever asked him to vote for me as captain of the nine," said Dale. "Now, here's a fine chance for you to make some money, Feather. There are over sixty boys here, and if I've worked to secure the pledges of the majority of them, you ought to get somewhere between a hundred and fifty and two hundred dollars, at the very least."

"Talk! talk! talk!" snapped Featherstone. "You couldn't raise that amount of money if you tried!"

Dale threw back his head and laughed.

"I won't have to," he said. "I won't have to raise one five."

"Well," said Guy, "perhaps you haven't been around pledging the fellows personally, but I'll guarantee you've been working the game through your friends."

"I can't be responsible for the acts of all my friends."

"Ah-ha!" snarled the boy on the steps, rapidly descending and facing Dale. "So I've hit it, have I? You're too clever to go around electioneering for yourself, and so you send your friends. Oh, I know what I'm talking about! You've got it all fixed."

"Let's consider this matter," said Dale calmly, although the blue in his eyes seemed changing to gray, a color which indicated that his temper was disturbed. "Had I been as covetous as you claim, I might have been chosen captain in spite of you and all you could do."

"I'd like to know how!"

"I happen to know that the majority of the athletic committee favor me. They have the power to appoint the captain. Bemis is to be manager of the team, and he exercises considerable authority. The first proposition was that the committee should name the captain. I objected to that. I think Bemis or any one who knows will tell you that it was my proposition that the whole school should have a voice in the matter."

"That's right, by ginger!" cried Bemis.

"More of your slick way of seeking popularity," said Featherstone, with curling lips. "You knew there would be a division of feeling if the committee named the captain. You knew a part of the fellows would claim it to be favoritism. You wanted to place the whole school in the position of backing you up. That's why you proposed the other plan of selecting a captain. While I've been shut off from the fellows your friends have fixed things so you can't fail to defeat me. Don't talk to me about your fairness!"

"As I previously remarked," said Dale, "you're an exceedingly wise guy! You know a whole lot that isn't true."

"How are you going to prove it isn't true?"

"Well, I have a little plan."

"What is it?"

"You and I, as rivals, will choose from the boys two teams to play a game of baseball to-morrow. The captain of the winning team shall be captain of the regular team to represent Farnham Hall. In this manner we will have a fair and even chance. We will snap a coin to see who has first choice. What do you say to that?"

It must be confessed that Featherstone's breath was taken away by this proposition. For a moment he seemed staggered, but he recovered quickly and grasped the opportunity.

"It's a go!" he cried exultantly. "You hear the agreement, boys."

Hi Bemis clutched Sparkfair's elbow and excitedly whispered in his ear:

"Are you crazy?"

"Not a bit of it," smiled Dale. "I'm going to take my chances, and I hope the best man wins."

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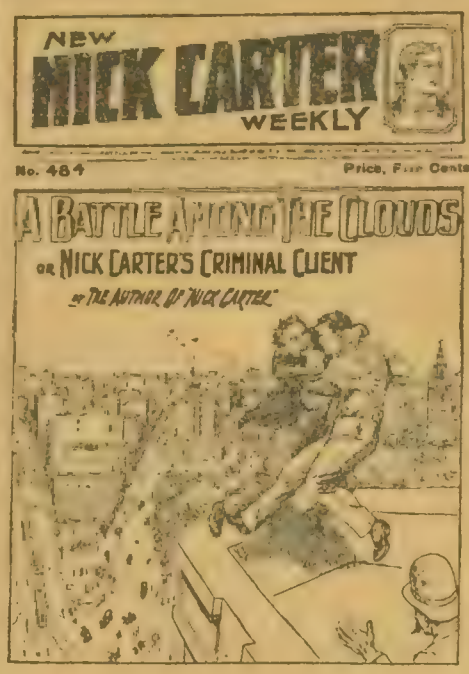

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OR,

NICK CARTER'S CRIMINAL CLIENT.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A SEVERED EAR.

When Nick Carter entered his house one evening, exactly a week after he had closed up the case which had been entered on his books under the caption of "The Murder Problem," he found awaiting him a tall, dignified, faultlessly attired gentleman, whose age might have been anywhere between thirty-eight and fifty years.

His hair, of which there was an abundance, was as white as snow; his long, military-shaped mustache and imperial were of the same hue; but his skin was as smooth and fair as a lad's of sixteen or twenty might have been, and his large, round black eyes were as filled with expression as a girl's.

Joseph had informed the detective that a gentleman was awaiting him in the reception-room, and Nick went there at once.

"You wished to see me?" he said interrogatively, as he entered the room.

"Yes, Mr. Carter; if you can spare me a little of your time," came the reply, in a soft, deep, musical voice which impressed the detective instantly as if hidden in it somewhere there were a familiar note or two.

He smiled back at the stranger, and glanced at his watch.

"I shall be leaving the house again in about an hour, sir," he said. "If you think you can transact your business with me in half of that time, I can see you now; otherwise I will have to make an appointment with you for another time."

"I think half-an-hour will be sufficient, Mr. Carter. Indeed, I have no doubt that I can tell you all there is to tell in half that time."

"Very well, sir, if in that case you will step into the library, I will rejoin you in a moment."

The detective conducted his client in person to the library, and then withdrew to his own room, from which he presently returned, prepared for the interview.

The stranger approached the subject of his call at once, and began it by introducing himself properly.

"I am Colonel Pearsall," he said. "A retired officer of the army. Here is my card, if you will be good enough to accept it. You will find my address there—rather well up-town, on the west side."

The detective glanced at the card and nodded his head;

then he glanced at it again, and shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

"You don't reside very far from the address where I have lately been engaged upon a case, colonel," he said.

"I suppose," replied the colonel, "that you refer to that very sad affair of Jeremy Jones, do you not?"

"Yes."

"I was deeply interested when I read in the papers about that sad affair. I am told that both of the Jones mansions are to be razed to the ground, and that two rows of houses are to be erected on both sides of the short street. In fact, work has already been begun on the house where the crimes were committed—however, that has nothing to do with my affair."

"I suppose not."

"Do you happen to remember having seen the house in which I reside?"

"I don't think that I recall it," replied the detective.

"Possibly you will do so when I describe it more definitely than by the number. It is situated just over the brow of the hill, where the street makes an abrupt descent to the river. You recall, of course, that there is a very steep hill there?"

"Certainly."

"I think that the steepest part of the entire hill along Washington Heights, is on that street where I live; and now you will recall the house itself, as standing almost on the edge of the bluff, overlooking the river. It is a large, two-story, frame house, built rather squat upon the ground. It stands back from the street, and is surrounded by about two acres of ground. There is an old stable there, now almost in ruins, and——"

"I remember it now, perfectly. I had supposed that the house was not occupied; and had not been lived in for some time."

"That is, in fact, true, save for my own occupation of the place," was the quiet reply. "And it is barely a month ago since I took the house."

"I was also under the impression," said the detective, "that the house stood in the track of the land condemned by the city for the extension of Riverside Drive."

"It does. I rent it from the city—at an exceedingly nominal figure—with the understanding that I may vacate at any time on very short notice."

"I see. Well?"

"Since I have resided in that house, Mr. Carter—and I have already informed you that it is barely a month since I went there—I have constantly been made the recipient of anonymous and threatening letters, and I have also been compelled to submit to the most unheard of nuisances that can be imagined."

The detective raised his eyebrows a little in surprise.

The statement was rather extraordinary, and he did not pretend to understand it.

"You will have to be more particular in your explanation," he said dryly.

The military-looking stranger seemed to hesitate a moment, and then, with great deliberation of manner, he removed from one of his pockets a small parcel done up in yellow paper, and having partly removed the wrappings, he leaned forward and laid the parcel on the detective's knee.

"Will you look at the contents of that paper?" he asked quietly.

The detective was rather puzzled by the manner of the request. However, he did as he had been requested to do; and the next moment he looked up angrily at the man who sat opposite him.

"Is this some hideous joke which you dare to perpetrate upon me?" he demanded; and with a quick motion he wrapped the paper again around the object it contained, and flung it unceremoniously back again into the hands of his caller.

The thing done up in the package, upon which the detective had looked, was, in truth, a human ear, and was about as disgusting an object to contemplate as can well be imagined.

Colonel Pearsall, however, remained unmoved. He merely shrugged his shoulders, while a half smile flitted across his rather handsome countenance.

"I know that I owe you an apology," he said, "and I make it. I, perhaps, should not have exhibited that loathsome object to you in just the manner I did, but I did wish, at once, to impress you with the significance of what I have been made to suffer."

"Colonel Pearsall," said Nick coldly, "you will be good enough to explain fully, exactly what you mean, and do so at once, or I will be obliged to bring the interview to a close."

"Mr. Carter," replied the colonel, "I do not blame you at all for your resentment. It is quite natural, under the circumstances; but when I tell you that the severed ear I have just shown to you is only one of the many annoyances to which I have been subjected, and to which I have already referred, you will pardon me, I know, for having taken that method of convincing you of the truth of what I am about to tell you."

"Well, sir?"

"That severed ear is the fourth ear I have received in the manner in which this one was brought to me. There have also been several fingers; there have been three toes; an occasional part of a nose; once there was a piece of an upper lip, with a part of the mustache of a man still clinging to it—I think that about comprehends a list of the variety of articles that have been brought to me."

"Brought to you where?"

"At my home; in the house that I have already described to you."

"Brought to you—how?"

"Ah! That is a question which I wish you to answer for me. That is why I am here."

"Do you mean that these hideous objects are left at your door?"

"No. I mean that they are left on my bureau; on my dresser; on my desk, where I write my letters; on the mantel over the fireplace; on a chair, where I am likely to sit—anywhere, in short, where I will be apt to discover them immediately after entering the room."

"And you have no knowledge of how they get there?"

"None whatever."

"And do not suspect who brings them to you?"

"I have not the remotest idea as to that."

"How do the messengers who leave these awful things with you obtain admittance to your home?"

"That is another question to which I find it impossible to reply. I do not know."

"Have you found no traces of their method of gaining admittance to the house?"

"Not one."

"And it is securely locked, at night. I suppose."

"Always."

"When are these things left with you—at night, or during the day?"

"Both, sir. More frequently I discover them in the morning, when I rise; but also I have found them in the afternoon, upon returning to the house after a short absence."

"How many persons live in that house with you?"

"Two; they are both servants."

"You have no family?"

"No; I am alone."

"Who, and what, are these servants?"

"Chinamen—both of them. One acts as cook and the other as general servant."

"Have they been with you long?"

"Only since I have lived in that house."

"Where did you procure them?"

"From a Chinaman who runs a restaurant on Broadway near Forty-second Street."

"Do these servants speak English?"

"One of them, not at all; the other quite indifferently, but enough to understand and to make himself understood."

"Do you suspect that the servants, or either of them, might, by any possibility, be connected with this thing?"

"Frankly, I do not. I have thought of that as an explanation, but I have utterly dismissed the idea."

"Have you an enemy, anywhere in the world, who could be capable of this thing, if it were possible for him to accomplish it?"

"I do not know of any such person."

"Humph!" said the detective. "A moment ago, you referred to anonymous letters; do you happen to have one of them with you?"

"Yes; I have several."

"One will answer for the present. Let me see it."

Again the man had recourse to one of his pockets, and again he brought out a parcel; but this time it contained nothing more shocking than several envelopes.

Selecting one of these, he removed the letter that it contained, and, having passed it to the detective, he settled back in his chair to wait until Nick Carter had read it through to the end.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORK OF UNSEEN ENEMIES.

The detective, for reasons of his own, read the letter aloud.

"'Colonel Pearsall,'" he read. "'You have been warned often enough to vacate this house. You are not wanted here at all. Your presence annoys us extremely, and if you insist upon remaining, you will be murdered in your sleep one of the nights, when you least expect it. We won't trouble those two chinks of yours, for they are harmless, and they will go away as soon as you do. But go you must, and that settles it. We won't say just when it is our intention to kill you, and to cut you up, for we are not quite ready to do it as yet. But that we will do so sometime, if you do not get out, the things we send to you are sufficient proof. We are scientific individuals who delight in cutting human bodies in small pieces—and after a little while, when we run out of subjects, we will cut you up—if you have not made yourself scarce around the neighborhood where you now live.'"

The detective refolded the letter and retained it in his hand.

"What about the others?" he asked.

"They are all about the same. Here they are if you wish to see them."

The colonel passed the other letters over to the detective, who took them and read them to himself, one by one, until he had examined all of them—and there were six.

But, as his client had said, they were all about the same. Indeed, the language of them was strikingly similar in each case, and the burden of them all was that the writer wished the colonel to vacate the house in which he lived, without delay.

"How long a time have you been a recipient of this sort of thing?" asked the detective.

"Ever since I have lived in the house."

"When did you receive the first letter?"

"The morning after the first night that I spent in the house."

"Did one of the hideous objects you have mentioned come with it?"

"Yes; an ear; not unlike this one here."

"And from time to time since then, you have received other warnings of the same kind?"

"Yes. At frequent intervals."

"Are the letters always accompanied by some part of a human body?"

"Always; but I have received the other sort of thing several times, without the letters."

"I see. They are left with you as silent reminders, eh?"

"I suppose so. It is not pleasant."

"No; hardly that. The only wonder is that you have not taken warning and left the house long ago."

"I am not easily frightened, Mr. Carter."

"So I should imagine. Nine men out of ten would have gotten out of there at once."

"Then I suppose I may consider myself the tenth man."

"You have no idea of being driven out of the house, eh?"

"Not at all."

"But suppose the writers of these letters should decide to carry their threats into execution?"

"Then, in that case, I would be a dead one, I suppose."

"Have you no fear that they will murder you, as they assert they will do?"

"I have a good deal of fear of it—but not the sort of fear that will force me to run like a coward. You see, Mr. Carter, it is this way: I think, each time that I receive a warning, whether it be in the form of an ear or a nose or otherwise, that I will manage to protect myself so that at the very next visitation from these people, they will find me on my guard and ready for them. I have set up night after night with a revolver in my hand, ready to shoot, and to shoot to kill, at the least sign of the presence of a stranger."

"And you have never had an opportunity to shoot?"

"Never."

"They manage each time to get into your home without alarming you, eh?"

"Yes; and they do it perfectly."

"You might set traps for them."

"Set traps for them! I have set traps until I can think of nothing new to create in the form of a trap. I have set bear-traps with cruel springs upon them—traps that would hold a man, or break his leg if it caught him. I

have stretched lengths of thread so fine that it was almost invisible, all over the house, where a stranger must have run against it and broken a strand, if he entered the house at all, and I have attached tinkling bells to those threads, so that if one were broken, a bell would ring and warn me."

"Well?"

"The bells do not ring; the threads remain unbroken, but the messages are brought to me just the same."

"It is remarkable, isn't it?"

"Remarkable? It is fiendish. If I were a man who would permit himself to submit to fright, I should either have run away long ago—or I should have been driven mad."

"And as it is, what is your present inclination?"

"My inclination is to stay there until either they kill me, as they threaten to do, or until I have driven them away, or have captured them, or have killed one or more of them."

"I notice that you always refer to your annoyers in the plural. Have you any material reason for supposing that there is more than one of them?"

"No; only that it does not seem possible that one individual alone could accomplish all that has been done."

"I agree with you there."

"I am determined to fight it out, Mr. Carter. I am a soldier, as you are aware, and I have never yet shown my back to the enemy. I shall not begin now."

"I applaud your decision, and yet you are running a great risk."

"I have undertaken risks all my life, sir. I shall not run away from one now."

"And what has brought you to me?"

"The desire to place the matter in your hands; to say to you that you can do as you will in that house, that you can remain inside it night and day if you care to do so, that you can direct me and order me about as you please, and that in each case I will obey you without question, and, finally, to assure you that if you will disclose this series of mysteries, get rid of those people for me, and capture, if possible, any of them, so that we can understand the mysterious side of it, I will give you the sum of ten thousand dollars."

"That seems to place the power entirely in my hands."

"That is precisely what I mean to do."

"And suppose, in the carrying out of what I consider to be my duty, I should order you to take a trip somewhere—to go away and leave me for a time in sole possession of the place—what then?"

"I have already said that I would obey orders."

"Tell me what you know about the history of the house before you took it?"

"I know nothing about it at all, save that it is the oldest structure—or is supposed to be the oldest—that exists to-day on Manhattan Island."

"Is that true? I did not know of that."

"I was told so; that is all I know about it."

"What more?"

"I was told that the original house was erected on that site, almost a century before the War of the Revolution, and that, in fact, the beams and the foundation of the building are the same to-day as they were then. I have been told that the house itself has been partly destroyed by fire—and otherwise—several times during the more than two centuries that it has existed—and that about covers all I know."

"In short, the house is practically the same as it was two hundred and fifty years ago."

"Exactly."

"Do you know when the present structure was erected?"

"No; I only know that it is very old."

"You have lived there a month?"

"About that."

"Where did you live before you took that house?"

"At hotels, chiefly. I had no settled place of living at all. I had been traveling for pleasure for many years. I did not really live anywhere at all."

"You are not a native New Yorker?"

"My people came from Long Island."

"I suppose you have no idea that these threats are directed at you, personally—I mean, because of any personal enmity toward you?"

"No, I have not. I think they are directed at me only because I live in the house."

"Do I understand you to say that you positively have no idea whatever as to how the intruders gain admittance to the house?"

"You do."

"By the doors or the windows?"

"I haven't the least idea in the world."

"Or by secret doors, or underground passages? I have just closed a case where a house was a perfect honeycomb of such things, strange as it may seem in this age."

"I have thought of that explanation, and I have looked for such things—but without success."

"Have those Chinamen of yours ever been disturbed?"

"Never at all."

"Have they seen nothing of these intruders?"

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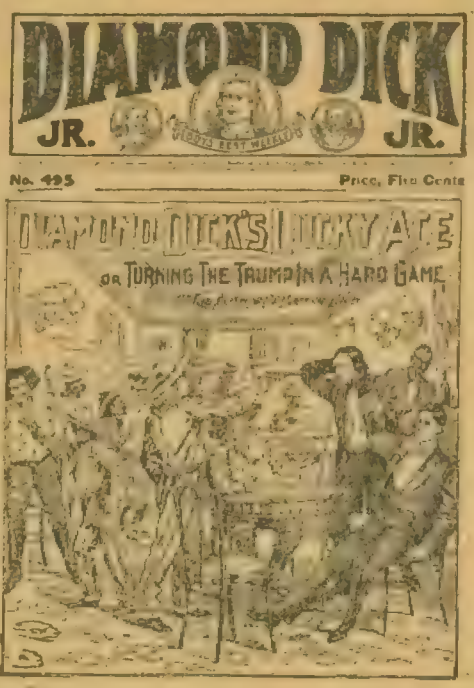

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THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE STORIES PUBLISHED IN **DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY** READ IT!

DIAMOND DICK'S LUCKY ACE;

OR,

Turning the Trump in a Hard Game.

By the AUTHOR OF "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

THE BURGLARY.

"Hold the light, Val."

"Wot's the matter? I ham 'oldin' it, hain't I?"

"Silence!"

"Ho, yes. That's it. Halways a-shettin' a cove hup hevery time 'e hopens 'is mouth. I'll tell you one thing, Purfessor. 'Pon me sivvey, I wish I wos hout of hall this!"

"Fool! Hold the light!"

It was a handsomely furnished library in one of the most aristocratic mansions in Portland, Oregon. It was dark save for the moonlight streaming through the long windows. The pale glow threw out of the shadows a massive table, with curiously carved legs, a closed desk inlaid with gold and ivory, against the wall, gilt-legged chairs, upholstered in the finest silks, bookcases, and oil-paintings against the walls, and here and there a statuette of marble and bronze, which had cost a great deal more money than a common person might suppose it to be worth.

The floor was heavily carpeted, and the curtains at the windows were of almost priceless lace.

An abode of wealth, beyond all question.

Suddenly from the darkness of the end of the room farthest from the windows there shot a ray of light, which dodged about and then disappeared.

It was then that the impatient order to hold the light came from a personage clad in a long black cloak, with a broad-brimmed hat upon his head and a black half-mask covering his face except where a heavy black beard was visible below. This man was busy.

He was kneeling in front of a large safe of solid steel, whose huge bolts and generally powerful constructions suggested that it could not be opened easily, except at the will of the person holding the combination.

Yet this masked and cloaked man, who was working hard at the front of the steel door, seemed to have no doubt that he could find his way into the safe, if only he had time to work.

Who he was could only be guessed, even if there had been any one to see him besides his scared assistant, who hailed originally from Whitechapel, and who was gen-

erally called Val, although he declared that his full name was Valentine Dobbs.

It may as well be admitted at once that the cloaked and masked man was no other than the mysterious "Professor" who had been concerned in adventures which had drawn Diamond Dick into them more than once.

It will be remembered by readers of No. 494, "Diamond Dick in the Breakers," that the Professor was discovered to be a member of a noted English family, who kept his identity concealed from people in America for reasons of his own. To everybody in Oregon he was known only as the Professor, and as such we will continue to regard him, too.

As he commanded Valentine Dobbs, in low, deep tones, to put the light where it would be of use, Val turned on a small electric lamp, so that a shaft of light was directed on the center of the steel door.

The light was not needed for long, because the Professor soon had an illumination of his own from a white-hot wire which he was pressing against the steel door surrounding the combination lock, and which was going through the metal almost as if it were paper, with a shower of sparks that made Val shiver with apprehension.

"I say, Purfessor, this 'ere is a bloomin' orkard thing to be doin' on. 'Ere we hare, at one o'clock in the mornin', tryin' ter git inter a safe in Mrs. Collins' 'ouse ter steal them there di'mun's which you was workin' so 'ard ter git up there in Vancouver when the steamer *Comanche* went on the rocks and was knocked inter smithereens. S'pose some one wos ter come, where would you be?"

The Professor did not answer. He was forcing his white-hot wire into the steel from the electric battery which was neatly packed into a suit case in front of him, and which was producing a heat of such intensity that even the chilled steel of the safe could not prevail against it.

There was no man in Oregon better versed in chemistry and electric science than this same mysterious Professor, and the electric battery he was using now for his nefarious purpose was mainly his own invention.

"Bring me some of those cushions, Val," he ordered, in a low tone.

Val scuttled over to a sofa on which several valuable cushions covered with costly velvet and satin were piled in picturesque confusion, and brought three of them to the Professor.

Laying the cushions carefully on the floor in front of the safe, the Professor asked if there were any more.

"Crikey billy! More? Why, yes. Do you want 'em?"

"Idiot! Should I ask for them if I didn't?"

"Ho, well, you needn't git the needle so quick, Purfessor! I'll bring 'em hover," grumbled Val, as he brought two more cushions from the sofa and laid them on the others.

"Now, stand back!" ordered the Professor. "Unless you want your head blown off!"

"My 'ead blowed hoff? Not for yer 'umble servant!"

Val moved to one side as far as he could get, falling against the table in his flight, while the Professor cautiously removed the battery in the suit case and prepared for the final act in his attack upon the safe.

He had worked clear through the steel, and now lifted out the combination lock in a solid piece.

The door would come away with the use of a comparatively light explosive, and therefore he introduced only a small amount of nitroglycerin into cracks which he had made in the steel.

It was a dangerous thing to do—not on account of the explosion being likely to hurt either of the midnight operators, but because there were people sleeping in the house who might be alarmed by the disturbance.

This splendid mansion in Portland was the home of Mrs. Maria Collins, one of the wealthiest women west of the Missouri and also one of the shrewdest of business women.

She was known everywhere as one who was equal to the most far-seeing men in speculative enterprises, and although no one had ever dared to insinuate that she was anything but strictly honest, she always insisted on her rights, no matter how hard it might be for others.

She owned mines in Oregon, and she had valuable houses and lands in San Francisco, while her dealings in the stock market were generally successful.

Her husband, who had died fifteen years before, had left her a fortune, which she had trebled since his death by careful speculation, and it was a common saying that she did not know herself how many millions of dollars she was worth.

Her only relative, so far as the world knew, was her son, Martin, who had just come home from Stanford University and was doing pretty much as he pleased, with unlimited command of money. Martin was the one person in the world with whom Mrs. Collins was free-handed. She gave him as much money as he wanted, only insisting that she should know he never slept away from his own home.

This was the woman that the Professor was trying to rob in the middle of the night under her very nose.

"Look out, Val!" whispered the Professor.

"Hall right. Let 'er go!" returned Val.

There was a whizz and a whoof, followed by a dull thump, as the nitroglycerin exploded, and the big steel door of the safe fell out and dropped easily upon the cushions.

In a second the Professor was working at the drawers of steel inside the safe, picking the locks with delicate wires, which he manipulated so dexterously that he opened them, one after the other, as if he had the proper keys.

One, two, three, four drawers he opened, shuffled his fingers hastily through their contents—papers, banknotes, and gold currency—with growls of disgust and disappointment.

He went to another drawer, applied his picklock, threw open the door, and uttered a stifled cry of triumph.

There before him in this drawer, glistening in the light of the small electric lamp he had taken from Valentine Dobbs, was a mass of blue-white diamonds, heaped up in confusion, but showing to his quick eye that they were all part of a magnificent necklace of rare workmanship.

"At last!" he muttered. "The Mosley diamonds are mine, and——"

Crash!

A fist against the side of his head hurled him flat to the floor, and as he leaped to his feet, his hand to a knife in a belt under his black robe, the muzzle of a Colt .44 was pointed straight at his forehead, as a cheerful voice cried:

"Don't touch that knife, Professor!"

"Diamond Dick!" gasped the masked man.

"Exactly! Diamond Dick!" returned the holder of the pistol, as he smiled at the Professor.

He was a handsome young fellow, straight-limbed, with long fair hair streaming under his white sombrero, while his cowboy costume, neater than such a costume is always, fitted his lithe figure to perfection.

"Wow!" roared a loud voice outside the door, as the tramp of heavy feet warned the Professor that the house was alarmed, even if he had not known it from the sudden turning on of the electric lights of the chandelier.

"Gee, Sarp! Cut out dat racket! Youse ain't on de bleachers at a ball-game!" squeaked another voice. "Git wise ter de fac' dat dis ain't de time fer spielin' so much ez it is fer gittin' busy! Wot's de fuss, Dick?"

Diamond Dick smiled, without removing his eyes from the Professor.

"Waal, ef I don't whirl thet thar kid out o' winder it's on'y 'cause he's shore a yearlin' an' tharfer ain't got no sense!" bellowed the big voice again, as the owner of the voice came forward.

He was a gigantic individual, also attired as a cowboy, with a red flannel shirt for the most conspicuous article of his dress, while a wide-brimmed soft hat, thrown back upon a shock of red hair at the back of his head, gave him a decidedly rough-and-ready aspect.

The big man's face was red, and he had a large bushy red beard, a good-humored, wide mouth, and twinkling blue eyes, which made his loud voice give the impression of blank cartridges from a heavy gun.

If you have met him before you will surely recognize him as Handsome Harry, the old pard of Diamond Dick, and if this is your first introduction you will find him a mighty good fellow all around.

He came forward to where the Professor was standing, petrified, under Diamond Dick's gun, and calmly threw his arms around the cloaked and masked figure of the burglar.

Diamond Dick kept his revolver in hand as he turned to a husky lad of about fifteen, who was dressed exactly the same as Dick, except that, as he was much smaller, his clothes were small in proportion.

"Where did you come from, Billy Doo?"

"Gee! We wuz close behind youse when youse left dat j'int over dere, an' it seems we come jest in time ter butt inter de fun, eh?"

The lad whom Dick had addressed as Billy Doo, but whose full name was William Doolittle, placed his hands on his hips and nodded at Dick knowingly.

He had just taken up his position, when there was a scuffle near the doorway, which startled them all, and they were just in time to see Valentine Dobbs, who had been hiding behind the door, make a quick exit.

Billy Doo and Diamond Dick both made a movement to stop Val, and Handsome Harry, for the moment, loosened his hold on the Professor.

That was what the Professor was waiting for.

Before Handsome Harry realized that he had been careless, the cloaked and masked figure had bounded toward one of the long windows, suit case in hand.

"Wow! Look out, Dick!"

The warning came too late! With one crash of the suit case against the glass, the window was smashed out—frame, sash, and all—and the Professor leaped through.

The parlor was only about ten feet above the street, separated by a four-foot area.

The Professor cleared the area with a mighty leap, and was on the sidewalk and around the corner before any one could stop him.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?" broke in a female voice, as a middle-aged woman, in a flowered silk dressing robe, stood in the entrance to the parlor, looking about her in dismay.

"Nothing, Mrs. Collins. We have saved your diamonds, I am glad to say," answered Diamond Dick cheerfully.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE POLICEMAN DID.

"What is all this?" demanded a gruff voice, as a tall, stout man, in the uniform of a policeman, marched into the room.

"Who are you?" asked Diamond Dick.

"Police."

"Yes; I see that by your uniform," returned Dick.

"I was on post, passing the house. Saw a man jump out of window. He got away. Very suspicious at this time in the morning—past one o'clock."

Diamond Dick laughed.

"Well, yes, officer, I should say it was suspicious. I wish you could have caught him. Did you recognize him as one of your friends?"

"Friends?" snapped the officer. "I do not make friends of crooks, young fellow!"

Evidently the policeman's feelings were injured.

He wore a ferocious mustache, curled up at the ends, as well as a dark beard, and his eyes seemed to glow with a yellow light, as he gazed angrily from Dick to Handsome Harry, and then to Billy Doo.

"Aw, cheese it, cull!" objected Billy Doo, bristling up like a bantam rooster. "Youse ain't got no right ter look at me dat way, ef youse is a cop! I kin lick yer ef yer will on'y tek yer buttons off!"

"Do it anyhow, Billy!" suggested Handsome Harry.

"Aw, Sarp, youse meks me tired! Don't yer know dat it is a mighty serious t'ing ter 'sault a officer? I ain't goin' ter do dat, not on yer life! But ef he wants ter try it wit' me ez a plain citizen, why, let him sneak out o' dat blue coat an' brass buttons, an' I'll give him de time of his life, b'chee!"

"Well, officer, if you are here for duty, I think you might as well look over the room, so that you can report to headquarters," remarked Diamond Dick.

"I think so," replied the policeman, with official brevity, as he stepped over to the safe and examined the steel door. "This is the work of a professional, I should say."

"'Co'se it is," put in Billy Doo. "Dat's ez clear ez mud. De guy wot kin blow down steel doors wit' ez much strength in 'em ez dat ain't no amatoor, youse kin betcher life!"

The policeman glanced at Billy in a patronizing way and continued his examination.

"Anything taken?" he asked.

"Nothing. But the thief evidently was after a valuable diamond necklace," returned Dick.

"Didn't get it, eh? Where is the necklace now?"

"I have it," put in Mrs. Collins, to whom Dick had given the diamonds, wrapped loosely in a paper.

"Let me see them."

Mrs. Collins looked at Dick in uncertainty, and the young man remarked coldly:

"I do not see the necessity for the officer to examine the diamonds, Mrs. Collins. They were not stolen, and they have absolutely nothing to do with the way the thief got into this room and broke open the safe."

The policeman shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you please. Only I like to have my case complete, and the chief may ask whether I saw the property. That's all."

Diamond Dick took the necklace from Mrs. Collins and held it in front of the policeman, but without offering to put it in his hand.

"There you are, officer. You can see them. They are magnificent gems, blue-white, and valued at two hundred thousand dollars. That is, for the diamonds alone. The gold setting, which is of splendid workmanship, adds a worth of several thousand dollars. The chasing of the gold could hardly be duplicated in this country at this time. It was done a long time ago by one of those European goldsmiths who took their secrets with them when they died."

The policeman looked curiously at Dick.

"You seem to know a lot about goldsmithing and diamonds," he growled deep in his beard.

"Not more than any one who may have read something about such things in a casual way. But I do know that this necklace is a splendid thing of its kind," returned Dick carelessly, as he handed the diamonds back to Mrs. Collins.

"No. You keep them for the present, until I get this safe repaired, or a new one," suggested Mrs. Collins, as she gave the package back to Dick. "I have no secure place for them. You can take care of them, I know."

"As you please," answered Dick, slipping the necklace into an inside pocket of his red outing shirt and buttoning it up.

Handsome Harry was watching the policeman, and he noticed that there was an eager glare in the officer's yellow eyes as Dick hid the necklace in his pocket.

"Wow! Them thar police is allers thinkin' they oughter git thar graft out o' everything they see. Reckon he'd shore like ter hev them thar di'mon's fer hisse'f," muttered the giant.

"I should like to go over this safe carefully," observed the policeman.

Dick nodded.

"I understand. You want to do it by yourself, so that you can do it thoughtfully and undisturbed? I think myself it would be a good idea."

"Well, of course, if—er—you think so, I—er——" stammered Mrs. Collins doubtfully.

The policeman understood her hesitation, and relieved her mind by saying, in a matter-of-fact tone:

"It would be well to remove everything of value from the safe before I begin, of course."

"Very well, Mr. Policeman. I'll get my son to help me. Here, Martin! Come here!"

Mrs. Collins beckoned to a young man who had remained modestly in the background near the door, but had been listening to the proceedings in an interested manner.

He stepped forward, with a mild "Yes, mother."

It was evident at first glance that he was much in awe of the masterful business woman, and also that she was in the habit of keeping her son under her thumb.

Mrs. Collins stooped in front of the safe and pulled out the drawers, all of which had been unfastened by the Professor with his ingenious bit of wire, and piled them up in her son's arms.

"Take those to my room."

"Yes, mother."

Martin Collins was an ordinary-looking young man, with dark hair and eyes, like his mother, and wore evening clothes.

He had just come in from his club, when he noticed the light in the parlor, and had only just comprehended something of what it was all about when his mother called him to her side.

She piled the drawers up on his arms and against his capacious white shirt and white collar and tie, regardless of the probability of tumbling up his gorgeous raiment, and packed him off.

"I don't see what makes that young man wear a dress suit every night. He got the habit at Palo Alto at college. They do those things there, but it is a little out of place in a plain city like Portland, except on state occasions or at a ball. He goes about in those spike-tails and white choker, as if he were on dress parade, every night."

Martin was walking away, with his armful of drawers, and it was his hard-headed mother making these remarks.

"Hully chee! Dat dame's got de right idee!" muttered Billy Doo approvingly. "Dey ain't no room fer dudes nowhere in Oregon. Dat duck is all ter de frills. Still, he may be de real t'ing, at dat. Youse ain't safe in sizin' up a guy's rags an' layin' it down cold dat he ain't up ter de right notch. I knows a guy wot allers wears a high collar an' red necktie wot's de best rough-an'-tumble scrapper I ever seen."

The continuation and conclusion of this story can be found in DIAMOND DICK, JR., No. 495, which is for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, five cents, in money or postage-stamps, by the publishers. Address

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Buffalo Bill's Rio Grande Feud;

OR,

THE GIANT OF THE APACHES.

By the Author of "BUFFALO BILL".

CHAPTER I.

THE STRANGER AT THE CAMP-FIRE.

"Buffler," said Nick Wharton, the grizzled, weather-beaten old trapper, as he stirred and sniffed at the coffee bubbling in the battered tin on the fire, "I ain't never been a feller ter hub sorrer, ner ter go ter hamstringin' trouble so's it can't git out o' my way, and you knows it; but sense that Mexican devil got out o' jail over in Taos I ain't felt jest easy in my j'ints."

Old Nick lifted himself up with dignity as he delivered this oracular speech, and looked at the famous king of scouts.

"The smell of that coffee, Nick, makes me forget everything else," was the smiling answer of Buffalo Bill.

"We wouldn't had ther coffee ef I hadn't gone to Santa Fé, and if I hadn't gone to Santa Fé we wouldn't run afoul o' Pedro Escobal. Seems ter me it's payin' too much fer ther coffee, good as ther truck is."

Then he stirred and sniffed again so solemnly that Buffalo Bill laughed.

Three men were grouped round this camp-fire near the banks of the Rio Grande, in the southern part of New Mexico. They were Buffalo Bill, the world-famed king of scouts, together with that other noted borderman, Wild Bill Hickok, and Nick Wharton, the old trapper.

Their camp was not out in the open, but hidden by rocks and a thick growth of mesquite and chaparral, and the fire had been fed with dry roots of the mesquite, so that very little smoke arose. All of which would have betokened, to one versed in the sign language of the old Southwest, that there was danger in the air, which these careful men wished to minimize, even though they appeared to be taking matters so calmly.

Wild Bill's keen eyes were fixed on a pinnacle of rock some distance away, where a moment or two before he had fancied he saw a movement of the vines and bushes. An animal or a bird might have stirred those bushes, or they might have been rustled by the movements of a man.

"Escobal swore that if he ever got out of prison he would kill you," he said, speaking to Buffalo Bill without turning his gaze from the rock pinnacle. "And I myself

am sure that I saw him yesterday not a dozen miles from this place. I don't think that you can guess where—

"In or near the cañon trail?"

"No; near Pete Santanya's cabin. I swung round in that direction, as I came on to this rendezvous. Just at the lower edge of the twin buttes, where the trail makes out into the plain there, I saw what at first I was sure was an Indian head-dress. Naturally that excited my curiosity, and I slipped from my horse and climbed a little peak for a look. From my position on the peak I failed to see the Indian head-dress again, but I did see a Mexican, or a man dressed like a Mexican; and if my glass didn't lie to me the fellow was Escobal."

"So?" said the scout, glancing round as if he half expected now to see this man, Escobal, walk out of the thicket toward him. "What was he doing near Santanya's cabin?"

"That's what I asked myself. After awhile I rode down to that trail, but I saw nothing. He was going in a direction to take him away from the cabin."

The great scout glanced about, and up at the pinnacle which Wild Bill was watching, and then his eyes came back to the fire and to the stooping form of old Nick Wharton, who was stirring away at the coffee.

"Hickok," he said, "you know the oath I have taken?"

"Yes, to run him down; and I know the oath he has taken—to kill you!"

"I don't understand why he should have been near Santanya's, but as we are to go on there after a little rest here, perhaps we'll put ourselves in a way to find out."

Wild Bill now pressed his foot gently against the scout's extended leg, but otherwise he did not so much as stir.

"Turn your eyes to the high rock there, pard!" he whispered. "Something has been moving up there for some time, and now I see that it's a man; yes, and a white man," he added, "and on horseback!"

Without shifting from his position, Buffalo Bill looked up at the pinnacle of rock. And old Nick Wharton twisted his eyes round in the same direction, though he continued to poke and sniff at the coffee.

Then they saw a fat-bodied man ride slowly out of a thicket and begin to descend the trailless slope, pushing a way through the thick undergrowth. Apparently he had seen the men by the camp-fire and intended to join them.

In another minute he disappeared.

Nick Wharton lifted himself again.

"It's a good thing that ther hill is a long ways off," he said, "er one o' us might 'a' been bored with a bullet! Ther critter is a stranger to me."

Buffalo Bill dropped down and slipped from the camp-fire, gliding with silent ease through the bushes. Nick and Wild Bill sat by the fire; Nick with his hand on his long rifle, and Wild Bill with fingers resting on his trusty revolver. Neither spoke until the scout returned, which he did in a short time.

"Yes; he's coming here, which shows that he saw our camp from the peak; but I don't think I know him. He has every appearance of being a greenhorn who has lost his way in these hills and cañons."

Some minutes later the big-bodied stranger drove his horse with a noisy crackle through the bushes and drew rein in front of the fire, staring at the three men he beheld there. An oily smile overspread his fat face.

"Well, Christopher Columbus, if I ain't glad to see ye!" he cried, sliding out of the big saddle. "You're Buffler Bill, and I know it! Durn it, shake!"

He stepped forward, dragging at the bridle-rein.

Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had both risen, while Nick peered at the man, but continued to poke at the coffee and at the fire—peered with a furtive glance that showed suspicion.

"Mebbe ye don't know me," said Fatty, grinning. "But, Christopher Columbus, I'd 'a' knowed you in Chiny!"

His hand was still extended, and Buffalo Bill was looking him full in the eyes.

"Your name?" said the scout. "We have to be careful, you know, down in this country, as to who we invite to sit at our camp-fire! I don't believe that I have the pleasure of your acquaintance?"

"And I ain't wantin' it any!" Nick muttered to himself.

"Well, I'm called Gabe—Gabriel Gulliver; and sometimes, when fellers want to be funny with me, they put it Oily Gabe. Take yer ch'ice; I ain't no ways p'tickler."

He evidently was not. He was greasy-looking and unkempt; and his clothing had been torn by the thorny mesquite through which he had been riding. And his horse, though big and strong enough, was as unkempt and sorry-looking a beast as he was a man, with its mane and tail hanging in matted strings, and its long coat showing that no brush or currycomb had touched it in months.

"I fust spied you from them rocks up yander," the stranger went on, catching the half-outstretched hand of the scout and shaking it warmly; "and fust glance I says to myself, 'Ef that ain't old Buffler, I'm a grasshopper-eatin' Piyute Injun!' Ye see, I knowed you, frum yer pictures, an' otherwise. There ain't no mistaken a man like you, no matter where he's met up with! Buffler, shake!"

He "shook," making the scout's arm swing like the handle of a pump.

"This is Wild Bill Hickok," said the scout; "and over there by the fire is my old friend Nick Wharton. Perhaps you've also heard of them."

Forthwith Oily Gabe was taking advantage of this introduction and shaking hands with Wild Bill and the trapper.

Hickok spoke a few words, asking where the stranger had come from and where he was going. Old Nick disdained to say anything, but looked at his fingers as if wondering whether or not that greasy touch of the stranger's palm had contaminated them.

"Where did I come frum?" said Oily Gabe, with a grin. "Ask me where I didn't come frum. Durned if I know where I've been, myself; and that was a question I was jest goin' to ask you—where air we at? Blest if I know. I was told that chunks o' gold and silver layed loose round down these parts, like pavin'-stones in a city, and I come down to load myself up with some; but I ain't found 'em yit. Still huntin' fer 'em, and wonderin' where I'd wandered to. Went up on that hill awhile ago to look the country over some. Seen yer smoke, then seen you; and then I comes amblin'. Ain't seen a white face fer months, and the delight of it makes me most swaller my tongue."

He grinned again; and then having ceased his hand-pumping, he drew the rein off the neck of his horse and

dropped down by the camp-fire as if to make himself at home.

"No one else up on those rocks?" said Wild Will.

"Not a soul. You're the fust folks I've seen in ages."

He thrust out his hands toward the fire, and then thrust out his nose, sniffing at the coffee.

"Smells good, that stuff does! Hain't had the smell of that old Arabian berry in my alabaster nostrils fer so long that it makes me want ter holler 'Halleluyer!' jist to git this sniff. And ven'son! Well, sir, the last deer I shot at run so fast to git away frum my bullet that I allow it's runnin' yit."

Both Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were studying the face of this man, as he talked on in his ingratiating, voluble way.

"I reckon you ain't hoofin' it?" said the stranger. "Yit I don't see yer hosses?"

"They're back in the chaparral," said the scout.

"Where mine ought to be, I reckon! If you'll p'int out the way I'll take the critter back there."

"You intend to stay here—I mean around here?" the scout asked.

"Well, I'm going to move whichever way you fellers does. I'm that turned round that I don't know at this minute whether my nose is p'intin' north er south. You're goin' out o' the hills, I reckon, and I'm ready to go. I ain't believin' there's any gold down hyer, er ever was. And yisterday I seen an Injun!"

He glanced round uneasily at that memory, and his eyes opened a trifle.

Buffalo Bill smiled faintly.

"If you should remain with us you're likely to see a good many more Indians!"

Oily Gabe half rose, staring.

"You ain't goin' out o' the country yit?"

"Hardly!" said Wild Bill, with singular intonation. "We've just come into it."

"Christopher Columbus!"

"We're thinking of going on farther south," said the scout, "and that will take us even farther from civilization. And, besides——"

He was about to say more, but stopped; for he did not know anything yet about this man, except what was visible on the surface.

"Besides what?" asked Oily Gabe, when the sentence was unfinished. "We're likely to see some fighting—both with Indians and with other people who are at times inclined to be more nasty and wicked in their methods than even Indians."

The stranger's jaw dropped. But his face brightened, after an instant of thought.

"Wherever you go, Buffler, durned if I don't stand by ye! I'm tired of my own s'ciety, and if I should strike out I couldn't find my way out o' this tarnal wilderness. Been tryin' to do that fer a month, and here I am yit. I reckon wherever you go it'll pay me to hang to ye."

"Stranger," said Nick Wharton, lifting himself and staring hard, "what if we shouldn't accept yer kind invertation?"

Oily Gabe laughed easily.

"I knows Buffler, by reppertation. The needy and the hungry, and them that's lost an' can't take keer o' theirselves, ain't never yit felt the toe o' his boot. Pardner, I'm helpless hyer in these hills! Whatever am I to do, if I can't stay with ye?"

CHAPTER II.

THE TOTEM OF GOLD.

The question of what to do with the stranger who had dropped in at the camp-fire so unceremoniously had not been settled, nor even discussed, when the sharp crack of a rifle from the direction of the high pinnacle of rock drew the attention of all.

Oily Gabe gave a little squeal of fear, that sounded comical from so large a man, and dropped down behind a rock, from above which the tip of his nose appeared, as he tried to discover the meaning of that shot.

Buffalo Bill and his two companions had also dropped out of sight with the crack of that rifle, and as suddenly as if they had been struck down by the bullet.

But they did not seek the shelter of a rock. They separated, sliding through the chaparral and disappearing.

Oily Gabe stared at the vanishing form of the scout, and then scrambled from his concealment and went shuffling and crawling in the same direction.

Buffalo Bill heard him, and stopped.

"Go back!" he said.

"But, Buffler——"

"Don't come crawling at my heels!" the scout warned harshly.

Then his eyes softened, for the stranger appeared to be undeniably frightened.

"Keep close here until I return," he urged, in a kindlier tone. "We must see what that shot meant."

He slipped on again, leaving Gulliver gasping like a stranded fish. The fat face was pale, and the whitish-blue eyes were rolling round as if he expected to see some enemy rushing on him. Yet he lay there, crouched behind a bush that was not big enough to half hide his head, and shivered, as he heard the soft movements of the scout's rapid progress away from him.

Soon he heard a crashing, heavy sound, as of some one running.

At this he lifted his head and peered, ducking down when he beheld a man stumbling heavily along a slope not far off, and coming in his direction.

Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill, and Nick Wharton had already seen that lurching form. Apparently, the man had been badly wounded by the shot they had heard and was running from the foe who had sent the bullet after him.

Nick Wharton now clutched his long rifle nervously.

With revolver in readiness, Buffalo Bill glanced from the stumbling form of the man to the ridgy crest where he had first appeared.

"Ah!" he said, as he caught sight there of another running figure.

"The Mexican I saw down by the twin buttes," whispered Wild Bill, who was not far away. "I think he is Pedro Escobal."

Buffalo Bill put down his revolver and took out the field-glass he carried slung at his side, and leveled the glass on the runner farthest away.

"Yes, Pedro Escobal!" he said, in a tone of conviction.

Wild Bill flattened like a snake at this, and crawled on, pushing his big revolver in front of him. A sudden light, blazing in his eyes, made it certain that if Pedro Escobal came within range of that heavy revolver the dead shot who held the weapon would make it warm for the Mexican.

But at that instant Escobal, who had apparently been

hotly pursuing the man he had wounded, stopped, stared, and then sank down out of sight.

A low exclamation of disappointment, like the hiss of a serpent, came from the lips of Wild Bill; and, turning round, he saw the head of Oily Gabe projected above a rock.

He threw up the revolver as if he meant to put a hole through that head, and Oily Gabe's fat, pale face disappeared from sight with comical suddenness.

Wild Bill sprang to his feet.

"Look out for the wounded man," he said to Buffalo Bill; "I'm going after Escobal!"

He leaped forward, with apparent recklessness, but he had placed a large boulder between himself and the point where Escobal had disappeared.

In another moment he had gained a hollow concealed by bushes, and up this he was running at a stooping posture and with incredible speed.

For a moment it seemed that Nick Wharton was about to join Wild Bill in this man-hunt. But the wounded man stumbled into view again, running more heavily and with staggering lurches that told his strength was well spent.

"He's got his ticket for over the divide, poor fellow!" was the thought of the scout, as he crouched low, looking out at the man.

Then he and old Nick saw the stranger throw up his hands and with a final stumble topple forward on his face.

Satisfied that Wild Bill would keep Pedro Escobal busy, and that danger from the Mexican was slight just then, Buffalo Bill ran out of the bushes, followed by Nick Wharton, and the two hurried to the man who had fallen prone on the rocky ridge.

In a few minutes they had reached him, and were bearing him back into the chaparral.

They were in a great rage against Escobal, for the man was Pete Santanya, whose cabin they had expected to visit that afternoon. And they knew that the Mexican renegade, Pedro Escobal, had shot him.

Santanya stared into the faces of the scout and the trapper, as they bent over him. There was a glaze in his eyes, which seemed to indicate the approach of death. He had run to the last gasp, and fallen only when his strength failed him.

"Buffler!" he whispered, as he recognized the great scout.

Buffalo Bill and Nick Wharton had carried him well back into the concealment of the bushes. There they laid him down on some soft grass, and then sought to stanch the flow of blood, which welled from a bullet wound in his side.

"Buffler, it was Escobal," said Santanya, coughing the words through his bloody lips. "I think—think he trailed me."

"An' then sent a bullet through ye, ther scoundrel!" cried Nick.

Pete Santanya tried to reach round to a pocket; but gasped again and gave up the task.

"The—the——" he whispered.

Buffalo Bill put his ear down to catch the words.

"The totem!" said Santanya. "The—totem—of—gold!"

He tried to reach again toward the pocket.

Understanding what Santanya referred to, Buffalo Bill put his hand into the pocket and drew out a leather case like a flat purse. Something disk-shaped was in it.

"That's—that's it!" said Santanya, in a faint whisper.

"I'll take a look about, so's not ter let any snakes slip up on us," whispered Nick Wharton; and, trailing his long rifle, he slipped away through the grass.

There was a look of deep pity, mingled with a flush of anger against the scoundrel who had fired the shot, in the face of the great scout, as he bent again over Santanya.

He extracted from the leather wallet a disk of a golden hue, about the size and thickness of a silver dollar, and observed that it was of hammered gold, marked with strange figures of a cabalistic character.

"Buffler!" whispered Santanya faintly.

"Yes," said the scout, putting down his head again to catch the light whisper.

"He follered me—him and some other of his devils—follered me, ter git that; knowin' that with it he could git into the cave. The totem is on it, an' it p'ints the way into the cave."

"What cave?" the scout asked, wondering.

"The cave of the mica rocks—down—down by ther—ther line. You know whar ther line is?"

"Yes?"

"Down—down thar. It's at the foot of the Calico Range, in the furdest of 'em; and the—the cave is shiny like—like mica on ther outside and on ther inside. Ther Injuns ain't fur away from it; and one of 'em—ther medicine-man—guards it. But that—that totem will open it—will let ye git by him. Take it, Buffler! Thar's tr-treasure thar; and git that treasure fer——"

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OR,

GORDON KEITH'S LONGEST CHASE.

By LAWRENCE WHITE, Jr.

CHAPTER I.

THE THEFT OF THE BELCASTER JEWELS.

The day was just like any other day. London was awake, swarming on foot, and bustling at work. None of its millions knew what was being done in official places. They never do know.

"Send for Keith!"

The voice came from a military-looking man with iron-gray hair, sitting at a writing-table within the massive walls of Scotland Yard.

"It will not be a bit of use, sir," replied the secretary in attendance, hesitating. "Whoever wants Gordon Keith must go to him."

"Then send for him in the name of the king!"

"Very good, sir."

No delay is the rule of Scotland Yard. The message was written, and was sent by special messenger to Keith's rooms, in Baker Street.

The famous detective read the letter, and returned a reply, with his compliments, that he would be at home during the morning to anybody from Scotland Yard that wished to see him.

"Um! he doesn't think he's an errand boy, anyway," thought the messenger, as he went his way back no richer than when he started out.

The letter had not been delivered more than an hour, before Keith's bell again rang, and Checkers, his young assistant, who was acting as page in the temporary absence of the butler, handed Blake a couple of cards.

"'The Duke of Belcaster' and 'Major H. B. Entwistle,'" Keith read.

"Bring the duke up, Checkers," he directed; and he turned again to the papers that he had been studying.

When the duke was brought by Checkers into the room, he was not alone, but was accompanied by a military-looking man with iron-gray hair. The duke's escort was the man of dignity and importance from Scotland Yard.

As Checkers placed chairs for the visitors and withdrew, Keith was already speaking.

"I am sorry your grace is ten thousand pounds poorer than you were this time yesterday," he said briefly.

"Good gracious! How do you know?" exclaimed Belcaster. "The evening papers have the news, but they are not out yet."

"Quite true," acknowledged Keith lightly. "But I

know the value of your jewels—that is public property—and the fact that you are here to see me is good proof that they are gone."

"Ah, yes, of course," the duke gasped at once; "but at first you astonished me."

"What can I do for you?" asked Keith, without delay, for he had never time to waste. "Does Major Entwistle accompany you in order to cooperate with me—for I imagine by your calling that you wish for my assistance—or does he attend as your adviser?"

"I attend as both cooperator and adviser," replied Entwistle, speaking before the duke. "Explained briefly, the circumstances are peculiar. I asked you to come to Scotland Yard, as you know, because I wished to place you in possession of the facts without risk of any of them being missed. As you could not come to Westminster, I have come to you. It is the duke's wish."

"But are you not employing any of your own people in the case?" Keith asked again.

"No; and for this reason," Entwistle explained. "You know, quite as well as I can tell you, how matters stand. There are the Seventy. We know them quite well, and so do you. We know their business, and so do you. If we could arrest them, we should break up the whole system of organized crime in the country."

"Unquestionably," Keith agreed again, looking at Entwistle closely. "But to what point does this lead?"

"Simply this," Entwistle went on. "We can't arrest one of them. We know they're there, we see them moving in society; but they are so protected by their social position, and the actual proofs of their criminal transactions are so well covered, that we cannot touch them."

Keith nodded.

"Quite so," he remarked. "But what is your purpose in consulting me?"

Entwistle smiled queerly, as if he was admitting his inferiority freely, though he scarce liked the compulsion that drove him to it.

"Well," he replied, "we do not deny the fact that we have nobody at the Yard to compare with you. The duke was very desirous of having your remarkable powers to help us in the investigation, and as he is one whose position calls for special consideration, I agreed that your assistance should be ultilized if possible."

Again Keith nodded, but it would have been a hard task for a man shrewder than even Entwistle to divine exactly what understanding the nod meant.

"Whether it will be possible for me to take up the case will depend upon what you have to propose," Keith intimated. "Is it your intention to give me an entirely free hand, or do you wish me to work in combination with your own people?"

"A free hand, completely," Entwistle announced. "And in that decision there is a motive quite apart from the effort to recover the jewels. There is no doubt whatever that this robbery can be traced to one of the Seventy; and our hope is that in investigating the case you, with your peculiar powers, will be able to step in in the very moment when it will be possible to clap your hands down on the proofs of criminality."

Once more Keith nodded comprehendingly.

"And who do you suspect was the engineer of this robbery?" he asked pointedly.

"The Honorable Basil Markham," Entwistle replied at once.

"I know the man," Keith remarked. "Commonly called 'The Instigator' by his friends. Do you know any of his fellows?"

"Suspectedly, yes; actually, no," Entwistle answered, in a manner which suggested that the men were of less importance than the master.

"I know them all," said Keith, almost casually.

Again Entwistle applied himself to the main subject, as if the knowledge that Keith might have of general rogues was not of immediate importance.

"You see our object, of course," he said. "So far, our men, with all their knowledge, have never been able to obtain red-hot proof that would justify them in arresting men, moving in the best society, on a robbery charge. Markham, for instance; to arrest him would be fatal. The outcry and scandal there would be in high circles if he were arrested on something that looked like proof, but that afterward turned out to be no proof at all! But working along your own lines, in your own singular way, you may have the luck to break through the magic circle. I suppose we may count upon having your service?"

"I thought it better to let Major Entwistle explain," said the duke, at last, as Entwistle finished. "He has stated exactly my own wishes."

"Do you agree that I shall begin my investigations at Belcaster House entirely alone?" asked Keith finally.

"Certainly," assented Belcaster. "It is your authority, of course, to dictate the manner of your procedure."

"Very well," Keith accepted briefly; "if your jewels are to be recovered, I will recover them."

CHAPTER II.

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY.

From the moment that Belcaster accepted the conditions proposed by Keith, the fate of somebody, as yet unknown, was sealed. And from that same moment Keith ignored Entwistle utterly. It mattered not to him how many men were put to work by Scotland Yard upon the mystery of the Duchess of Belcaster's stolen jewels; they might come into touch with him, but they would not affect his own method of procedure. Their way was not his way, and that was enough.

"Checkers!"

Keith had excused himself to Belcaster and Entwistle for a moment, and had left the room to suit his action better in another apartment. Already he was at work, which was a fact that Belcaster and Entwistle would not so much as have suspected, much less realized.

With that keen light in his face that always made a cheerful, expectant grin, Checkers answered the call immediately.

"Yes, sir," he said at once, seeing business and not pleasantry in Keith's face, at a glance.

"Get the London directory, Checkers," Keith said briefly; "make a list of every steamship company's office in the West End, and then hurry round like greased lightning and get lists of all the passengers sailing by the boats leaving London, Liverpool, and Southampton during the next fourteen days. Here's my card, and if there is any question, say, in strict confidence, that the lists are for me."

"Right, sir," replied Checkers, like a fellow on the skip. "More Cocos Islands, Mr. Keith?" he added, his wide-awake face beaming. "If it is, I hope you will take me."

"I don't know yet, Checkers," replied Keith, with a half-smile at the young imp's enthusiasm. "It may be a run

round the world; but that will depend upon you and your lists. Off with you! You have three good hours' work before you; meet me here at two o'clock this afternoon."

Checkers was off like a shot from a catapult, and Keith returned to Belcaster and Entwistle.

"I am now at your service," he announced to the duke, "and I propose first to see exactly the state of things at Belcaster House."

"Shall I accompany you?" Entwistle inquired, as if he would be glad of the opportunity of watching the detective methods of the famous Gordon Keith.

"There will be no need, I think," Keith replied, in a tone that suggested that Entwistle could better employ his time.

Somewhat disappointedly, it seemed, Entwistle accepted Keith's decision; and, while he returned to Scotland Yard, Keith and Belcaster drove quickly to Belcaster House.

The duke conducted him to the duchess' dressing-room, where a small safe stood in a Spanish mahogany cupboard. But not a mark, not a scratch of any kind, presented itself to view on the face of the safe. Yet from this safe gems of the value of ten thousand pounds had vanished mysteriously.

"Have you the keys?" Keith asked the duke.

The keys of the safe were produced, and Keith threw up the window of the room, and looked at them closely in the clear, unbroken light of day. Presently he returned the keys to the duke without remark.

"Well?" inquired Belcaster, with all his curiosity and interest excited.

"Presently, please," Keith postponed. "We are on the second floor of the house. I think you said that there had been no burglary in the ordinary sense of the term—no breaking and entering?"

"None," Belcaster confirmed.

"Then there are only three other things that will require to be seen," Keith summed up. "I know everything that is to be known here. I see that you do not make a rule of locking this cupboard door."

"That's true, I believe. The duchess has been somewhat careless in that way. But how on earth do you know it?"

"If you crook your forefinger, and run the side of it over the brasswork round the keyhole," Keith suggested, "you will find by the touch that the keyhole has been little used. There is no dryness from fingering there."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Belcaster, amazed. "I don't know who, but you, would have thought of such a thing!"

Keith remained quite unmoved by the compliment.

"Quite a dozen people have been in this room since the robbery was discovered, have they not?" he suggested. "Major Entwistle has been here, of course?"

"Yes," replied the duke, his amazement growing. "How did you know that?"

"I inferred as much," Keith answered evasively. "We will look at the other three places—the front and area doors, and the back door."

On the front and area doors, Keith bestowed not more than four minutes' scrutiny—two minutes to each door.

But upon the back door of the house he bestowed a full five minutes. Then, with his lens, he examined the face and top of the back wall of the kitchen yard. The house backing upon the yard from the rearward street was empty, but its ground floor was in the occupation of a resident caretaker.

"That's the way your man came," Keith intimated, nodding at the empty house; "opening the doors and locking them behind him each way."

"Do you suggest the caretaker as the thief?" asked Belcaster.

"Not in the least. He is as ignorant that a man has passed through the house as you were until a moment ago," Keith dismissed. "Have you entertained at dinner during the past fortnight? If so, I should like the names of the guests."

Belcaster considered a moment, and then said:

"Lord and Lady Malpas, Sir Rupert and Lady Carling, Mr. Justice Pemberty and Lady Pemberty, Mr. Waxford and the Honorable Mrs. Waxford, Major Entwistle and Miss Entwistle, his sister; the Honorable Basil Markham, of whose way of living I have had no suspicion until now, and my own sister, Lady Dorothy de Montford."

When Keith had finished recording the names, he nodded in his characteristic, brief way.

"There's the secret of your loss," he then said; and he held up his right thumb-nail, and revealed the minutest possible particle of wax adhering to it. "This back door has been opened with a skeleton key, but before that happened, somebody had taken an impression of the safe key in wax. Who that somebody was will be for me to tell you later."

CHAPTER III,

JAMES CRAWSHAW, THIEF.

Within five minutes of his leaving Belcaster House, Keith was driving in a hansom cab to the St. James' Park Station of the Underground Railway. His way, then, lay eastward, and, half-an-hour later, he was in the district of Aldgate.

From Aldgate Station he turned into Bevis Marks passing the great synagogue of the Jews, until he stood before the open door of a building devoted to business. The ground floor was occupied by a manufacturing firm, but the upper floors were let as offices. The names of the several tenants were painted on the broad door-post, and the lettering at which Blake gazed more particularly set forth the following announcement:

THIRD FLOOR.
JAMES CRAWSHAW, COMMISSION AGENT.

Evidently the whole of the third floor of the place was not let, and Crawshaw's office was the only one in occupation. Without hesitation, Keith crossed the threshold and ascended the stairs. When once he was embarked upon the pursuit of mystery or crime, he never paused before any risk. He tapped his hip under his coat, and was satisfied; his revolver was there.

Presently he stood outside the door of Crawshaw's office, but again he did not pause. He opened the door, and walked into the office, which, apparently, consisted of only one room.

At once the solitary occupant of the place started, and leapt to his feet.

"Great blazes!" he exclaimed, seeming hardly to know whether to grin boldly or to gnash his teeth. "I didn't suspect that you knew I had shifted here. It will mean doing another change, I suppose."

"Good morning, Jim," Keith said coolly. "Waiting for letters? You will have to get up very early before you can hope to cover your tracks from me."

"So it seems," Crawshaw growled, in the manner of

a congenial rogue whose habit is to make the best of it when caught.

"You've been here a month to-day," Keith considered. "And you're Crawshaw now, eh? Have you got anything 'sweating'?"

As he asked the question, Keith looked rapidly round the room for signs of the usual device of thieves—a depositary in which plunder is placed to "sweat" until it can be safely removed. Apparently, the four walls of the room were sound; but linoleum covered the floor, and Keith looked at it with suspicion. As for the other contents of the room, they were a strange assortment for a business office. There was a table that was plainly little used for writing, an easy chair, three ordinary chairs, an office wash-stand pedestal, a cabinet, and a structure that resembled a bookcase, having doors of wood instead of glass.

"'Sweating'?" echoed Crawshaw, answering Keith's question. "No; not so much as half-a-pinch, so 'elp me, Jimmy Johnson!"

"Bed, eh?" remarked Keith, tapping the apparent bookcase.

Crawshaw grinned.

"Guess there's no need to tell you if you know," he said.

Keith had penetrated the device quickly. The whole front of the false bookcase, at a height of a foot from the floor, was capable of being lowered outwardly from the wall, and, when so lowered, formed a very comfortable bed.

"A handy pop-in for the night when the regular port at Tredegar Square looks likely to be blockaded," Keith remarked. "You've got your head screwed on pretty comfortably, Jimmy! I see you've a 'cut' made of the street door-key."

"Hang you!" blurted Jim, with frank and genial disgust. "You've got too much know by a long chalk!" And as he spoke he snatched from the mantelpiece and put into his pocket a key, which bore all over it the mark of a key made to order from a pattern supplied.

"I'm glad you think so," rejoined Keith coolly. "Well, I'm going to look round here."

"Not you!" returned Crawshaw at once, dropping his affable roguery and understanding with the law, and becoming ugly in mood and manner. "I don't mind cracking a joke with 'cops' for a bit of sport, for we're all in the same game. Sometimes it's their innings, and sometimes it's ours. But I stop short at the things that don't suit me. Try looking round, by George, and see!"

"I'm going to look round here," was Keith's only answer. And as he spoke he drew his revolver from his pocket.

But Crawshaw was as quick, not with a revolver, but with a flying sling of line and leaden ball. It was no part of Crawshaw's tactics of war to use a revolver here in broad day, with the world wide-awake, although he had a six-chambered Colt in his pocket.

Had the round of lead struck Keith full in his forehead, he must have gone down with little hope of solving mysteries any more. In short, he probably would have been a dead man. But in the haste of his aim, Crawshaw knocked his hand against the corner of the table, and the deadly missile, instead of crashing into Keith's face, jerked aside and struck the wall of the room, in which it left an ugly round indentation.

Before the desperate rascal could recover the ball, Keith was upon him. His intention was to give the thief a rap with his revolver, of sufficient hardness to surprise and stagger him; but Crawshaw was as quick as before, and he seized Keith's wrist in a fierce grip.

Not always was the strength and resourcefulness of Keith invincible; and sometimes he had had to contend with ruffians almost twice as strong as himself. And such was the case now.

In a moment he was down upon the floor, carrying Crawshaw in his clutch as he fell. The war now was one of grip against grip. Seconds only held the balance between life and death—a few seconds more, and perhaps all power for a last supreme effort would be gone.

Then it was mastery of mind that rose superior to mere brute strength. Keith released his grip upon Crawshaw's throat, knowing full well that he could never recover his hold upon it again. But it was his keen, resourceful mind that was fighting in place of his hands.

On the hearth of the fireplace, over a gas stand that Crawshaw had lit before he was surprised, a kettle was now boiling vigorously. Crawshaw's legs were toward the kettle, but only for a moment longer. Keith overturned the kettle with a fling of his dropping hand, and the rogue leaped up with a howl of alarm.

But Keith was up as quickly, and with a blow he sent the rascal back again to the floor, wrenching the Colt from his pocket as soon as he fell.

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MIGHT AND MAIN

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THIS IS A SAMPLE OF THE STORIES PUBLISHED IN **MIGHT AND MAIN** READ IT!

Bound to Succeed;

OR

THE BOY WHO OWNED A CIRCUS.

By "ONE OF THE BOYS."

CHAPTER I.

"COMING! THE WORLD'S BIG SHOWS!"

Thus the interesting announcement was headed.

It was conspicuous in the Martindale *Record*.

Ben Barker, the printer's devil, inspected that part of the wet sheet with the most absorbing interest.

He had set up the date under the electrotype with his own hands.

"Hoop-la! Hey, Rube!" he cried. "A good ad."

"Three rings. Two stages," he read. "Four gorgeous, mighty shows combined.

"Only shows that have fifty cages of living wild animals.

"A herd of twelve monster performing elephants.

"One hundred stars of the arena, from all the great European circuses.

"Four daring trapeze artists par excellence.

"Three great and intrepid whirlwind equestrians.

"Five beautiful lady bareback riders.

"A troupe of ten clowns. Merry sons of Momus from all lands."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Ben.

"Only shows that have the genuine wild men of the woods of Ji-Ti-to-ti.

"Only original gigantic, scientific, and magnificent gold-plated steam-piano. Its music is sweeter than the music of the spheres and can be heard at a distance of four miles.

"Costs no more to see these big city shows than to patronize fly-by-night crossroads concerns that give no return for your money.

"Wait for it! Keep your eye on the day and date! Wait for it!

"This mighty, magnificent aggregation will positively appear as advertised, rain or shine. Its dates are unalterable, as the laws of the Medes and Persians. The one great, always satisfactory show that never divides and never disappoints.

"The day on which this majestic and unparalleled exhibition will appear in your town will be a public holiday. Excursion trains on all roads at reduced prices."

"Well, I guess so!" Ben whistled. "The junction here makes this the best little town for circuses in the State. They'll all be here, too. They'll come from Cattin Hollow, Hornby Forks, Caton Center, Millertown, Slab City, Jackson Summit, and all the other burgs round. Farmer Smart'll be here, I'll be bound, and of course he'll bite on some skin game—always does, and after it's all over I suppose Sim Prunty'll wish he was a fire-eater, won't you, Sim?"

And Ben turned smiling to an older boy who was distributing type.

"I'll break your head!" threatened Sim.

"No, you'll not; can't do it!" and Ben read on.

"The grand free street pageant given at ten-thirty in the morning is a mile of moving splendor, gay, glittering, sumptuous, and astounding! Worth going miles to see; once seen, never to be forgotten!

"Free! Free! At the show-grounds, after the parade! Peerless balloon ascension by Professor Sanguinario, world-renowned aeronaut. Secured by the management of this unapproachable exhibition at the enormous salary of fifteen hundred dollars for each and every day. The like never seen by mortal eye! Will thrill and hold you spellbound! Opportunity of a lifetime! Come to town early and bring the children!"

"To miss it is to miss it sure," commented the printer's devil. "Now, what's next?"

"Warning! The management of the World's Big Shows warns the public against unprincipled fakers and confidence men and their dishonest games. The immense crowds who visit the World's Big Shows attract such adventurers. Our large force of detectives traveling with the exhibition make arrests every day. So effective is our detective service that such men as do business on the street corners for any time at all may be presumed to be honest and deserving of patronage. Every innocent device on the show-grounds has stood the test and may be depended upon."

"Depended upon for what, I wonder?" Ben Barker muttered. "That's a good bluff, anyhow. A good ad., but is it a good show?"

"What's that you say?" demanded Sim Prunty, leaning over Ben's shoulder and speaking in an unpleasant voice, as he ran his eyes down the circus advertisement.

"I said that's a good bluff there about the detectives and their honest fakers," answered Ben. "Looks more like a scheme to put folks off their guard and run them up against the show's own games."

"What a deep chap you are," was Prunty's sneering answer. "You ought to be a detective!"

Ben looked at him curiously.

"Well," he drawled, "you know I have some ability that way. I got onto your curves once, all right, and if it hadn't been for my regard for Mother Midgley I don't b'lieve I'd been able to keep you out of jail. One thing's certain, Sim."

"And what's that?"

"I'll never go away out of town again to keep from testifying against you and wait for your trouble to blow over."

"You're always rubber-necking round my affairs," accused Prunty.

"You know better. I'm afraid to know any more about you than I have to. You know I wasn't to blame for knowing you sto——"

"Shut up!" commanded Sim. "You sha'n't talk that way about me! I won't have it!"

"Then you should be more honest and decent, and not give me any, or any one else any, chance to say ill of you."

"It's been about a year now, Ben, since I gave you a good licking, and you're about due for another!"

Ben seemed to grow two inches in height.

"Sim Prunty," he said, looking his enemy full in the eyes, "I've grown a good deal more than you have in a year, and though you're older and bigger than I am you can't thrash me now in any kind of a fair fight. I don't want to have any trouble with you, but I'll give you a big surprise if you ever try to do for me again."

Sim gave a grunt of disgust.

"You're not worth botherin' with," he said; "only a dirty-faced printer's devil! Bah! Ba-a-a-ah!"

Ben laughed.

"Sim, you seem more like a billy-goat than a typographical expert."

The printer's devil of Martindale was about fourteen years old, and not very big for his age, but he was the picture of robust health, as agile as a cat, and a match for any boy in the village when it came to a scrap. But it never came to a scrap where Ben Barker was concerned, unless some one else precipitated the trouble.

Ben was good nature personified, and had not more than one real enemy in the place. He greeted everybody with a frank and laughing face, and had many times proved his eagerness to do his neighbors good turns when opportunity offered.

All in all, he was the most popular boy in the village. If he had parents or other relatives anywhere in the world, he did not know it. He had been adopted in infancy by Mr. and Mrs. Midgley, and they had preserved a very strict secrecy as to his origin, if, indeed, they knew much about it.

Editor Midgley was the village crank, and though he had never denied Ben ordinary creature comforts, he had been impatient with him and not any too kind in some ways.

The Martindale *Record* was not a prosperous business venture. Midgley had squeezed a living out of it, and no one had ever cared to attempt to establish a rival sheet.

CHAPTER II.

SOME COMPLIMENTARY TICKETS.

Sim vouchsafed no reply to Ben's last remark except a menacing grimace.

"Devil or no devil," sang out Ben, "monkey or no monkey, I'm pretty near the whole thing here!"

Young Barker, though nominally the devil of the *Record* office, did more real work on the paper than Sile Midgley himself, and when it came to sticking type and kicking the old Gordon press for odd jobs of printing he was simply indispensable, and, unappreciative of the boy's value as Midgley was to all appearances, he would not have dispensed with his services willingly, and sometimes kept him working when the neighbors thought he would better have been in school.

But Ben never complained. Mrs. Midgley was a good friend to him, and in various ways compensated him for some of her husband's shortcomings. It was his real affection for his foster-mother that made his lot bearable as he grew to be a big boy.

He would have scouted the idea that Mrs. Midgley was not his best friend, and no one could have made him believe that Sim Prunty, Sile Midgley's nephew, had any friendship for him at all.

Sim was also a member of the Midgley household, and an employee in the *Record* office. He was about four years Ben's senior, and just as bad a boy, any one in Martindale would have told you, as Ben was a good one.

He was not the type of a young fellow known as the village torment. He was literally the village pest, and the people who did not heartily despise him were neither numerous nor discerning. He was always making trouble for somebody, and whether it was with docking some farmer's horse, turning cattle into the corn, disturbing church meetings, or killing some little girl's pet cat that he amused himself, it was invariably something mean that he did, and no cause for it all was ever admitted except what Squire Hunter called "pure cussedness."

Though a very careless and incompetent workman, he had arrived at that stage where he might put on craftsman's airs over Ben. He had served his time. While the boy was his superior in nearly everything there was to be done around the office, Sim affected to hold Ben in contempt on account of their relative stations in the trade. Ben was always working, studying, planning, learning. Sim simply killed time and stayed away from the printing-office often when he was needed there.

"Bah!" he repeated; "you're only an ink-monkey and a roller-washer—just a good-for-nothing printer's devil!"

"There's where you're mistaken, Sim," grinned Ben. "I'm a good printer's devil and you're a good-for-nothing printer."

Sim gritted his teeth, but the approach of Editor Midgley prevented him from making any other answer just then. But when his uncle was in the front room he shook his fist savagely at Ben.

"You'd better remember what I told you awhile ago!" warned the boy, and then he began to fold papers.

After awhile the agent who was in advance of the World's Big Shows came in for some papers.

"Say, boy," he said, addressing Ben, "I've got some little errands to do, and if you do 'em for me you'll get some extra tickets. What d'ye say?"

"How is it?" cried Ben. "Can I go with this gentleman a little while?"

He was speaking to Editor Midgley, but the latter had gone out unnoticed by Ben.

"Yes, Benjamin," answered Sim Prunty; "I will let you go, but don't stay longer than necessary."

Then he came to the door between the two rooms and said to the advance agent:

"The kid can go with you, sir. Just put his tickets in the envelope when you leave our editorial passes, and I will attend to them."

Ben was indignant enough to tell Sim just what he thought of him, but he did not want to make a scene before the circus agent. As he went out he wished he could manage somehow to get his part of the tickets into his own hands. He had had too many evidences of Sim Prunty's disposition to deal unfairly by him to have any thought that he intended to do the square thing by him now.

He attended to the advance agent's errands faithfully, and when he reported to him the latter said:

"You've done well, boy. I'll put three tickets for you in the envelope with the rest and leave them all right before I go in the morning."

This was better than Ben expected. Three tickets, all his own. He knew Midgley would have plenty for the office and the family. He would give one ticket to old Mrs. Green, who was too poor to pay her way into the circus. He would give one to Mr. Roberts, an old soldier, who sawed wood round the village and had filed his skates last winter and refused pay for the job. Then he would have one left for himself without having to ask Mr. Midgley for one, and he had learned to dislike to ask the cranky old fellow for anything.

He went to bed early that night, resolved to be at the office when the advance agent came in and claim his own from Sim before it might be too late. He arose early, but as he was making for the front door Mother Midgley called him back and asked him to go for her to the house of a friend half-a-mile away and not in the direction of the office.

The clock told him that it was six, and the advance agent would leave by the six-twenty-five train. Sim Prunty was to open the office, and was doubtless there by this time. Ben had no time to lose.

"Won't after breakfast do?" he asked.

"Hardly," answered Mother Midgley. "Better go now, Ben."

The boy did not protest, but his face was rueful and his heart was heavy.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNFAIR FOEMAN.

When Sim Prunty got to the *Record* office the advance agent of the World's Big Shows had been there before him and had pushed a sealed envelope under the door.

He opened it very carefully, and found with the tickets promised the office three other tickets, separately wrapped and marked: "For the boy."

These he thrust in the pocket inside his vest. Then he carefully resealed the envelope and laid it on Sile Midgley's desk.

"Did the agent leave any tickets for me, Sim?" asked Ben at breakfast, for he had been kept so long that there had been no time to go to the office.

"I s'pose so. There's an envelope on uncle's desk with something or other in it. Guess you can trust uncle to give 'em to you if they're there, can't you?"

"Of course."

"Well, Ben," said Midgley, as he counted the tickets he had taken out of the envelope three-quarters of an hour later, "there's nothing here for you."

"Nothing? Sure?"

"Here are the tickets he promised the office, and not one more." And Midgley, who was in a more than usually gracious humor that morning, spread them out on the desk for Ben to count.

"That's so." Ben was bitterly disappointed. "I didn't think that man would do me such a small trick as that. He seemed to be all on the square."

"Can't always tell, Ben. This is a deceitful world, and circus folks are a bad crowd, anyway. But of course you can have one of these tickets. You belong to the office. Here it is."

Ben thanked Midgley and put his one ticket away carefully, thinking regretfully of what he had thought to do for old Mrs. Green and Corporal Roberts. He looked suspiciously to Sim Prunty, and Sim looked away from him very hard.

Ben did not like Sim's actions, and resolved to keep his eyes open during the two weeks that would elapse before the arrival of the World's Big Shows.

Sim had told him that he ought to be a detective, and he determined that he would be one, to the extent at least of discovering whether Sim had robbed him of the fruits of his work for the advance agent.

Several days passed without incident or discovery bearing on the case, but Ben did not fail to notice that Sim avoided him and seemed a good deal put out whenever he said anything about what he called the circus man's shabby treatment of him.

He did not really believe, however, that the advance agent had been as mean as he appeared to have been, and he was all the time listening and looking round, not impertinently, but observantly.

One morning early he went down to the store on an errand for Mother Midgley. An old man named Jim Kinsey was there, and he was buying some small articles amounting to about twenty-five cents. Ben was the next customer, and he stood right behind Kinsey, awaiting his turn.

Kinsey handed the merchant a pass to the circus in payment for the merchandise.

"There," he said, "you get fifty cents for a quarter's worth of goods. You're doing well enough and I'm satisfied."

"How do I know the ticket is all right?" asked the merchant. "Did you earn it, Kinsey?"

"Not exactly. I got it in trade from Sim Prunty. I got that and two more. Editor's tickets, you know, and good for best in the house."

"Nothing here about editor, but I guess they're all O. K."

Now Ben Barker knew to a certainty that Sim Prunty had robbed him and traded his three tickets to Kinsey, and he knew what Kinsey had given Sim for the tickets only too well. There was no license in Martindale. Jim ran a boot-leg saloon. That is, he sold liquor without a license. He had no place of business, but always had one or more bottles of whisky in his pockets for any promising trade that offered.

Sim Prunty had come home drunk twice during the past five days.

Ben was arithmetician enough to put two and two together.

"Let me see the ticket," he said to the merchant. "I'll tell you if it's all right."

The ticket was not made out to the Martindale *Record*, on

account of advertising, but for "services rendered advance agent."

The evidence of Sim Prunty's dishonesty was complete.

He said nothing about the matter at the breakfast-table, but as soon as he and Sim were alone together at the office he told the latter what he knew and demanded the cash value of the three tickets.

Sim had no defense. He was a natural-born bully. His first impulse was to cow Ben, and if possible prevent him from saying anything about the matter.

He gripped his two hands on the boy's throat and choked him painfully.

But only for a moment. He received a stinging blow in the face that made him loosen his grasp. Ben followed this up with a blow on the jaw that landed the big coward on the floor.

Sim struggled to his feet and advanced threateningly toward the boy, who did not recede an inch.

"Come on!" he sang out; "and I will give you worse than that! I haven't been boxing all the spring for nothing!"

He hoped Sim would be wise now, but he was not. He made a vicious lunge at Ben and got a blow between the eyes that blinded him and sent him to the floor again.

"Now, if you've got enough," suggested Ben coolly, "I advise you to wash up and get to work before your uncle gets here. I'm not going to tell him that you stole from me, but if you don't leave me and my affairs entirely alone hereafter, I'm going to give you enough of this kind of attention to pay up all the old scores I've got against you, and you know I've got a few."

Sim staggered up, and seizing a small ink roller that lay on the feed-board of the old Gordon hurled it at Ben with murderous swiftness.

The missile struck the wall back of the boy and fell at his feet.

"Don't try that again!" Ben said warningly. And Sim did not try it again, but his crooked mind began to plan ways to make it disagreeable for the boy. He had no appreciation of Ben's generous declaration that he would not inform Midgley of his theft.

Prunty smeared some printing-ink on the bridge of his nose and on one of his cheeks opposite that point. Then he filled the side of his face with paper and sat down to await the arrival of Midgley.

The editor was unusually nervous that morning. He had not slept or eaten well, and he was easily excited.

"What's the matter?" he asked, noticing Sim's damaged appearance. "You look as if you'd been blown up."

"The kid pounded me in the face with that roller there," was Sim Prunty's ready falsehood. "He accused me of taking those show tickets the agent promised him. You opened the envelope, and know they wasn't in there. When I denied it he jumped at me and swore awfully and pretty near brained me with that roller. He must be going crazy."

CHAPTER IV.

MORE TROUBLE BREWING.

"What does this mean, Ben?"

Editor Midgley made a threatening motion toward the printer's devil.

"The show agent did put the three tickets he promised me in that envelope. Sim opened the envelope before you got to the office and took my tickets out, then sealed the envelope again and put it on your desk."

"That's a lie!" yelled Sim Prunty. "Oh, Uncle Midgley, look how my face is swelling up!"

And he pushed his tongue against the wad of paper in his cheek and made it bulge out as much as possible.

"It's the truth," persisted Ben. "You've got the tickets you found in the envelope, or know where they all are. Isn't that so?"

Midgley nodded, but a little ungraciously, for he felt that somehow Sim would come out second best in this matter, and his nephew had made him so much trouble that he wanted to be spared more. He did not love Ben any too well, and in his heart he would have been glad to see him worsted.

"And they were made out to the Martindale *Record*," continued Ben. "Mine said 'for services to advance agent.'"

"How do you know that if I stole 'em before you ever had a chance to get 'em in your hands?" Sim asked sullenly. "How he can lie, uncle!"

"I told you that awhile ago and I'll tell your uncle now, and you make the best out of it you can. I didn't intend to tell him, and I told you that, for when you choked me I gave you the worst of it; but now you've lied about me I'm going to tell this thing straight through."

Then turning again to Midgley he continued:

"I saw one of my tickets this morning. Old Kinsey traded it to the storekeeper for some sugar, some salt, and a bar of soap. He said he bought three from Sim Prunty, and that was one of them. He sold my tickets to Jim Kinsey, and you know what old Jim gave him for them, for you've helped undress Sim and put him to bed twice lately. Go down to the store and look at the ticket. It will speak for itself."

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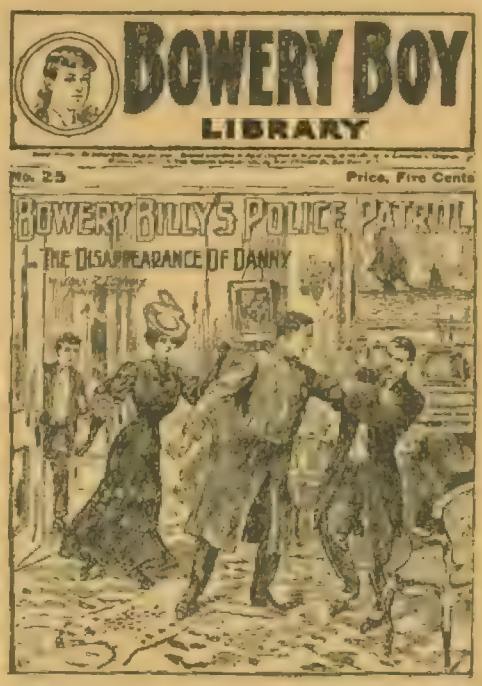

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BOWERY BILLY'S POLICE PATROL;

OR,

The Disappearance of Danny.

By JOHN R. CONWAY, Private Detective.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIND OF PATROLMAN REILLY.

"Green bananers, Danny! Where yer goin'?"

"Crazy, Billy, I'm thinking! Get out of the way, or come along with me if you want to. Don't bother me now!"

Dan Reilly, the big young policeman, was rushing along the Bowery as if he went by steam. He had met Bowery Billy and the latter had caught hold of him and forced him to slow up.

But now Danny broke away from Billy's grasp, and, to make up for the lost time, he started on a run.

There was at the moment a good-sized crowd on the Bowery sidewalk of the motley description which ordinarily makes up the Bowery crowds. It was made up mostly of Hebrews and dagos. The shopkeepers stood in their doorways trying to entice customers to enter. From one place a variety of melodies floated forth from phonograph horns with a piano jangling in the rear and a man walking back and forth announcing, in a brazen voice, his willingness to make change, giving pennies to use in the slot machines.

But none of these attractions had the power to charm the ear or otherwise to entice Bowery Billy or Policeman Reilly, although they were not above such amusements when in the mood.

Billy turned about and ran along at the side of Danny, who, club in hand, mowed a way through the crowd in his pursuit of a nimbly running figure, of which he obtained only now and then a glimpse.

The one who seemed to be in such a hurry was a well-dressed, prosperous-looking man, who did not seem to be built for sprinting.

Soon after Bowery Billy joined Danny they reached one of the cross-streets forth from which a crowd was pouring, returning from some scene of local excitement like a small fire which had been squelched, or a fight. It was just the sort of a crowd to block the way, and even Danny's club could not clear a path through it before it was too late.

For the moment they were right at the foot of the stairs of an "L" station, where the crowd was denser still. Whether the portly man had gone up those stairs or passed beyond them neither Bowery Billy nor the young policeman could have told.

In either case Danny realized that he had lost his game, and at the same time it occurred to him that for him it might not be such a serious matter after all.

The reason for his reaching this decision he made haste to explain to Bowery Billy as he stepped into a vacant doorway and said:

"Let him go! I yelled at him two or three times, but he wouldn't hear, or pretended that he didn't. And yet he looked back at me once, and I waved the thing at him and he must be a fool not to see what it was I wanted of him."

"And does yer t'ink I'm a fool too, because I don't know wot it is yer drivin' at? I'll say dis fer yer, Danny—yer explain t'ings so dat dey are jest about as clear as mud."

"Look here, Billy."

Danny turned his back to the crowd, unbuttoned his coat, and, shielding the object from the view of all except Bowery Billy, he furtively displayed a wallet of well-worn leather, stuffed with money so that it was as round as a jelly-roll.

The pocketbook was old, cracked, and worn, and the green money which it contained showed through plainly at various points.

The sight of money was not so rare to Bowery Billy that it gave him any particular shock even if there were a big roll of it. At the same time there is always something about the appearance of a roll of money in the form of crisp bank and treasury notes that will attract and hold the eye. Therefore, Bowery Billy stared at this, and, reaching out, poked his finger at it and then squeezed it in a meditative sort of way.

"Where did yer git it, Danny?" he asked.

"Why, that blooming idiot dropped it as he was rushing along the street. He pulled out his handkerchief to wipe the sweat off his face, and out tumbled the roll. Not one in the whole crowd that was passing noticed it, and it got kicked into the gutter before I could pick it up. I yelled at him and flourished it over my head, and he looked back and must have seen it. He acted like an idiot. He deserves to lose it, and—say, Billy, let's step inside here for a minute."

The place was a small restaurant and the hour not a busy one. There was not a single patron either at the counter or at any of the half-dozen tables.

There was only one waiter in attendance, and Danny called on him for coffee, beefsteak, and several other things which neither he nor Billy wanted or would try to eat, for they had visited the same place before and knew that the stuff served there was vile.

But this disposed of the waiter for five minutes, anyhow, and, sitting side by side, Policeman Reilly and Bowery Billy made a hurried examination of the contents of the pocketbook.

"Cripes! der's a t'ousand dollars dere, most all of it in tens!" said Billy.

"Just about a thousand on a quick count," agreed Danny.

"Dat's something of a find, and I'm t'inkin' dat cull won't feel pretty good when he looks fer der roll and realizes dat he ain't got it."

"Why in thunder didn't he stop when I waved it at him and he staring straight at it?"

"Likely der cull's cross-eyed, and you t'ought he was lookin' at yer when he wasn't."

"I think it's his wits instead of his eyes that were crooked. Well, Billy, I suppose there's only one thing to do, and that's to advertise it."

"Sure."

"Just think of it, Billy—a cool thousand all in a lump—more than I'll be able to save out of my salary in three years. And, say, Billy——"

Danny lowered his voice, glancing toward the door through which the waiter had disappeared.

"What is it, Danny?"

"You remember I said something to you awhile ago about a chance I had to make a bit of extra money on the side?"

"Aw, cripes! In der bucket-shop gamble!"

"But there's a fellow on the force that makes more money every year on straight tips than he gets out of his salary. You see he has a friend that he pulled out of an awful bad scrape—saved his life, I believe—and this friend is on the inside. He is one of the sort that doesn't think anything of pulling in two or three such rolls as this all in the same week. He knows his business, and he's so good to my friend that he wouldn't fool him for anything. And he's willing to let me in."

"Green bananers!"

"What makes you say that, Billy?"

"Aw, cripes, Danny! I was t'inkin' dat yer was gittin' straightened out and dat yer was savin' money from yer salary and goin' straight and easy. And here yer be chewin' der rag about a bum old stock gamble. I tell yer, Danny, if yer goes inter it yer gits t'rowed down."

"But I haven't gone into it."

"Den wot yer talkin' about it fer? And wot is der findin' of dis roll ter do wit' it?"

"Why, nothing, really. Only I suppose if I advertise it there's a good-sized chance that I won't find the owner. Probably that man is such a blooming idiot that he never looks at a newspaper."

"In dat case, Danny, der t'ing ter do wit' dat roll is ter chuck it inter der bank wit' der rest of yer savings."

"Of course, Billy. Likely that's just what I'll do. But a bank pays awful small interest, and der fellows dat git rich puts their money into something that makes more money for them. Ain't that right, Billy?"

"Some of dem does. But a feller can't be a good cop and do much business on der side. Here am I runnin' a bootblack stand and playin' der detective on der side. But der detective business is t'rowin' down der other, and old Morgan, wit' his trust, is tightenin' his grip on der public. It ain't right, and I keeps t'inkin' dat I'll cut out der detective bluff and put in all me time showin' people der difference between honest oil blackin' and rosum mixed wit' coal-tar like der sort der Morgan dagos spreads on der shoes of deir customers."

"Say, Billy, you're the queerest fellow I ever see. You're sharp enough ter git rich if ye wasn't so scared of trying a new bluff."

"Dey're nutting but bluffs, and dat's why I'm shy of dem."

"Well, Billy, we won't say anything more about it. You has your ideas and I has mine, and we ain't got to agree in everything."

The waiter appeared just then with the eatables.

Danny thrust the roll of money out of sight.

They sipped at the coffee and tasted the beefsteak, and in this way they spent some time really talking while they pretended to be eating.

Danny saw that it was no use talking to Billy with the

idea of persuading him that anything in the nature of a stock gamble was safe. Billy was one of the sort to whom the chances to get rich quick by a stroke of luck had never appealed.

He had gone into one or two things, yet with very little idea of making a lot of money out of them. And it may be said that on that score he had not been disappointed.

While Bowery Billy pretended otherwise, it was, nevertheless, true that the profession of a detective was the one which he was ambitious to follow, and his success so far had been remarkable. Really, the side line with him was the shoe-blacking part of his work, which he attended to only when the other did not claim his attention.

But, while Dan Reilly talked of other things, it was plain enough to Bowery Billy that his mind was preoccupied with the enticement of the big roll of money which was concealed at that moment in his hip pocket.

At last they got up from the table and returned to the street. Danny was supposed to be on duty, and, as it was early in the day, it would be some time before he was again at liberty.

"I'll have to take care of the cash, and this evening I'll drop a little ad. in the office of two or three of the newspapers and see if the owner of that money stays shy. I don't want the money, Billy, unless it belongs to me, though I won't pretend I'm anxious to have the owner come round after it. He looked to me like a man that might lose a good many such rolls without being thrown down by it."

"Aw, likely he's a rich cull, but dat's der sort ter look after der rolls. If yer advertises der stuff all straight I'm t'inkin' der's a good chance of yer findin' der owner."

Danny shrugged his broad shoulders. In spite of himself, the words of Bowery Billy gave him an uncomfortable feeling.

The big young policeman was really perfectly honest at heart. But he had some rather extravagant ideas, and before he had gotten onto the force he had never been able to get any money ahead.

For that matter he was usually in debt. If he obtained a position to work at a fair rate of pay he immediately set about making a spread with his money. He liked to look and appear prosperous whether he was so or not, and the appearance of prosperity on a small salary is always more or less dangerous.

Billy knew the faults of Danny, and he likewise knew Danny's virtues.

The young policeman was true to his friends, and he developed plenty of courage to face the dangers and disagreeable elements of his business.

Bowery Billy did not have a truer friend than Dan Reilly, or one who would have stood by him closer in the time of need.

Besides this, he had confidence in Billy. The boy ferret had helped him in many a tight pinch and stood by him when he had few friends. He would never have gotten onto the police force but for the influence of Bowery Billy, who not only stood in well with Mr. Myrick at headquarters, but with many other officials who were high in the councils of the department.

As they separated on the street Danny seemed to have cast the matter of the money which he had found completely out of his mind. It was the understanding that he would advertise it without delay, and Bowery Billy had not a doubt but that he would do so.

Bowery Billy had obtained only a slight glimpse of the man who had lost the money. Yet it occurred to him that he might possibly run across the individual again. And he was not to be disappointed.

CHAPTER II.

MYSTERIOUS MR. WARFORD.

Bowery Billy had occasion about two hours after parting from Danny to go up-town on the elevated as far as Twenty-third Street on the Third Avenue line. He made the trip, transacted the business which called him there, and returned to the "L" station on the down-town side.

As he flung his ticket into the chopper another man just behind jostled against him, and, as they stepped onto the train together, they chanced to take seats exactly opposite each other in the middle of the car.

Billy glanced at him and then stared. He was a big, portly, prosperous-looking man, with a face that was not unpleasant, although he had a somewhat nervous manner with his eyes. Bowery Billy always noticed such peculiarities and remembered them forever afterward.

"Cripes!" thought Billy. "Dat looks like der cull dat Danny says lost der money."

Billy's wits worked fast. The more he looked at the man, the more strongly convinced he became that he was the one who had lost the fat wallet.

The continuation and conclusion of this story can be found in BOWERY BOY LIBRARY, No. 25, which is for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address on receipt of price, five cents, in money or postage-stamps, by the publishers. Address

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